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Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
House Committee on
Transportation

Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

Measure: S.B. No. 2400, S.D. 1
Title: RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") offers the following comments for consideration.

Comments:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure to exempt wing-in-ground craft from the Commission's jurisdiction.

The Commission notes that wing-in-ground craft will likely be regulated by the U.S. Coast Guard for the purpose of safety. Additionally, the Commission believes that the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") may have regulatory authority over certain wing-in-ground operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2400-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2026 10:33:07 PM

Testimony for TRN on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Ishikawa	Aero X Ventures	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Aero X Ventures
In Support of SB2400
Relating to Transportation

Chair Kila and Members of the Committee on Transportation,

Aero X Ventures submits testimony in support of SB2400.

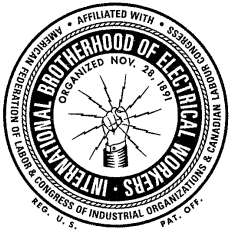
Aero X Ventures is a venture capital firm focused on emerging aerospace and advanced transportation technologies. From this perspective, we view wing-in-ground craft, commonly referred to as seaglidors, as a promising innovation with the potential to enhance interisland mobility while supporting Hawai‘i’s long-term decarbonization and economic diversification goals.

SB2400 provides a clear and appropriate update to existing law by recognizing that current water carrier regulations were developed for traditional maritime operations and were not designed for this new category of technology. As described in the measure, wing-in-ground craft operate using ground-effect technology and are subject to existing federal safety oversight. Exempting these operators from regulation under the Hawai‘i Water Carriers Act helps avoid duplicative regulatory treatment that could slow responsible innovation without improving public safety or consumer protection.

As the State evaluates next-generation interisland transportation options, regulatory clarity will be important to enabling responsible deployment and investment. SB2400 would support Hawai‘i’s efforts to position itself as an early leader in advanced, low-emission interisland transportation while improving connectivity across the islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2400.

Sincerely,
Aaron Ishikawa
Aero X Ventures



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

LOCAL UNION NO. 1186 • Affiliated with AFL-CIO

1935 HAU STREET, 5th Floor • HONOLULU, HI 96819-5003
TELEPHONE (808) 847-5341 • FAX (808) 847-2224

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Hearing on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m., Conference Room 430

RE: TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SB 2400 SD1

Honorable Chair Darius K. Kila, Vice Chair Tyson K. Miyake, and Members of the Committee on Transportation:

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 1186 (IBEW 1186), is comprised of over 2,700 men and women working in electrical construction, telecommunications, civil service employees, and educator and faculty associations.

As a union dedicated to the advancement of Hawaii's workforce and the pursuit of the State's 100% renewable energy goals, we recognize that Seaglidors represent the future in clean, zero-emission interisland transportation. We **support SB 2400 SD1** as it provides the necessary regulatory clarity to allow this innovative industry to take flight without the redundant oversight of the Public Utilities Commission, which is better suited for traditional water carriers.

The deployment of Seaglidors will create high-quality, high-paying jobs for technicians, electricians, and systems specialists. Our members are ready to provide the skilled labor needed to build and maintain the electrical infrastructure and charging systems required for these vessels.

With public safety already overseen at the federal level, exempting these crafts from the Hawaii Water Carriers Act prevents unnecessary costs that would otherwise discourage investment in our State, and slow potential job creation. We believe that by passing SB 2400 SD1, the Legislature will stimulate investment in our green economy and ensure our workforce is prepared for the next generation of transportation.

We respectfully urge your committee to pass SB 2400 SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director
before the
Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Conference Room 430
Tuesday, March 24, 9:00 AM
In consideration of
SB2400, SD1

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, Members of the Committee.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **support** of **SB2400, SD1**, which would exempt wing-in-ground (WIG) craft—commonly known as *Seaglid*ers—from regulation under the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act (HRS 271G). This legislation is timely, necessary, and aligned with Hawai'i's climate, transportation, economic development, and resilience priorities.

This bill correctly highlights several statewide benefits of Seaglid

ers which include zero operational emissions, additional rapid interisland travel opportunities for healthcare, essential services, and employment. This is especially critical for neighbor island residents who rely on Oahu's medical facilities. Seagliders also enhance resilience and emergency response operations by reaching communities isolated by disasters, support humanitarian missions, and strengthen food and medical supply continuity.

Workforce & Economic Development

The growth of a Seaglid

er industry in Hawai'i aligns with Hawai'i's and HTDC broader economic diversification goals of strengthening Hawai'i's innovation economy, creating high-skilled jobs, attracting sustainable infrastructure investment, and positioning the state as a global leader in clean maritime-aviation technologies

PUC Regulation Is Not Necessary and Would Slow Deployment

HRS 271G was devised to regulate traditional maritime shipping, ensuring continuity of service, preventing monopolistic practices, and overseeing tariffs and rates. It is not designed or intended for federally regulated craft like Seaglid

ers. Further no other state imposes PUC type regulations for water transportation this way. They rely upon:

- U.S. Coast Guard to provide consumer protection oversight for WIG craft.
- Federal maritime laws for vessel classification
- State boating laws for basic operational rules (navigation, speed limits, environmental rules)
- Seagliders are intended to complement air travel, not compete as water carriers as was the purpose of HRS 271G.



Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation

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Applying HRS 271G would impose duplicative and costly regulation without improving safety, environmental, or consumer protection. Exempting WIG craft aligns Hawai'i's regulatory framework with federal jurisdiction and with how WIG and other aviation-adjacent technologies are treated nationwide. This legislation is not about favoring one company or technology—it is about removing structural barriers which prevent Hawai'i from adopting zero-emission transportation solutions.

SB2400, SD1 is a forward-looking, climate-aligned, and economically beneficial measure that modernizes Hawai'i's regulatory landscape to support clean, efficient, and resilient interisland transportation. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committees to pass this legislation.

Mahalo for your leadership and for the opportunity to provide testimony.





Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is Michael Proulx, and I am here today to testify in **strong support of SB2400**. I am the Regional Director for North America at REGENT Craft. REGENT is the developer and manufacturer of all-electric Wing-in-Ground craft, known as Seagliders, which are a new mode of transportation that combines sea and air travel to create a high-speed, efficient, accessible transportation solution to move passengers and cargo between coastal communities.

In my role at REGENT, I've had the unique opportunity to join a collection of local community stakeholders right here in Hawai'i to form an organization called The Hawai'i Seaglider Initiative, or HSI. HSI membership spans across multiple sectors, from large transportation giants like Hawaiian and Southwest Airlines, to prominent community leaders like Kamehameha Schools and the Hawaiian Council, to agriculture and energy, and hospitality and healthcare. Over the past two years, this coalition has met regularly to discuss the fundamental transportation and logistics challenges facing the islands. It's clear that Hawai'i's reliance on limited, inefficient, carbon-intensive inter-island transportation networks hampers equitable economic growth in all communities.

HSI has identified three main pillars, or benefits, that Seagliders bring to the state:

1. **The first is Decarbonization:** Seagliders directly support the state goal of 100% clean energy by 2045 by fostering a zero-emission alternative to fossil-fuel-burning flights.
2. **The second is Access & Equity:** Seagliders provide a new, high-speed lifeline for underserved communities, improving access to critical healthcare on O'ahu and lowering the cost of travel for local families.
3. **The third is Resiliency:** In times of emergency, Seagliders can provide rapid response to areas that are currently difficult to reach.

SB2400 represents an important step in achieving these milestones identified by the Hawai'i community. The bill recognizes that Seagliders are not massive cargo ships, or slow-moving ferries, but their own class of innovative vessels. Subjecting them to the same Public Utilities Commission regulations as heavy water carriers would create unnecessary red tape, stifle innovation, drive-up costs for a service meant to be affordable for all residents, and subject the PUC to divert attention and resources away from their current mandate of responsibilities, which is to set just and reasonable rates so a monopoly doesn't over charge. Considering



Seagliders' unique modes of travel, the vessels will function within a market ripe with competition in the transportation space where price competition is essential to success.

Hawai'i has a unique opportunity to lead the world in sustainable maritime technology while making life easier for local communities. I urge this committee to pass SB2400. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



March 24, 2026

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Rep. Darius Kila, Chair; Rep. Tyson Miyaka, Vice Chair; and Committee Members
Public Hearing, March 24, 2026, 9:00 p.m. – Conference Room 430, State Capitol

Testimony of William F. Anonsen
Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group
In Support of S.B. 2400 SD1, Relating to Wing-in-Ground Craft

My name is William F. Anonsen, Managing Partner and Principal of The Maritime Group. We respectfully submit this testimony in support of S.B. 2400, SD1. This measure represents a thoughtful and forward-looking step in enabling wing-in-ground craft, or seaglidors, as a sustainable addition to Hawai'i's interisland transportation system. As noted in the Senate CPN Committee Report, these crafts offer an innovative opportunity to enhance inter-island mobility while supporting the State's long-term decarbonization and economic diversification goals.

As an island state, Hawai'i depends on reliable, efficient, and resilient transportation. Wing-in-ground craft provide a unique, zero-emission solution that complements existing air and maritime services while advancing Hawai'i's statutory climate and clean energy goals.

Equally important, this measure provides appropriate regulatory clarity. By recognizing that these crafts are subject to federal safety oversight, particularly by the U.S. Coast Guard, the bill avoids unnecessary duplication of regulation at the State level. This balanced approach helps ensure public safety while removing barriers that could delay innovation and deployment of this promising technology.

The broader benefits are significant and aligned with the Legislature's findings:

- Improved access to healthcare and essential services for our neighboring island communities;
- Enhanced emergency response, disaster relief, and overall resiliency;
- Expanded affordable interisland mobility options; and
- Support for workforce development, innovation, and job creation in Hawai'i's green economy.

S.B. 2400, SD1 strikes the right balance: it enables innovation, supports environmental stewardship, enhances connectivity, and maintains appropriate safety oversight. It is consistent with the State's broader policy direction and reflects a prudent, well-aligned approach to emerging transportation technologies. For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for this measure.

Respectfully submitted,

William F. Anonsen

William F. Anonsen
Managing Partner/Principal
THE MARITIME GROUP

1000 Auahi Street, Suite 1509 Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96814
Tel: (808) 232-1831 www.The-Maritime-Group.com

March 24, 2026, 9 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 430 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Transportation

Rep. Darius K. Kila, Chair

Rep. Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2400 SD1 — RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and other Committee Members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [SB2400 SD1](#), which would exempt operators of wing-in-ground craft, or “seaglidings,” from the state Public Utility Commission’s water carrier regulations.

Seaglidings have the potential to revolutionize transportation in Hawaii by providing a low-cost, low-carbon and high-speed way to get between islands. They could fill an important niche in Hawaii’s transportation network and make it easier for residents to access healthcare, education and economic opportunities.

Seaglidings are vessels that can operate on water while in harbors and fly above the water while in transit. They glide at extremely low altitudes over the water to take advantage of the ground effect.

The ground effect is a phenomenon in which an aircraft’s wings generate less drag when the aircraft is close to a surface, such as water. This makes seaglidings more efficient than conventional planes.

Unfortunately, current law makes it unnecessarily difficult to operate seaglidings in Hawaii. Because seaglidings can operate on water while in harbors, they are regulated as water carriers, even though they operate more like aircraft.

Under the state’s water carrier law, most seaglider operators would have to receive a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the state Public Utilities Commission before operating in Hawaii. Receiving a

certificate from the commission is a long and difficult process that would act as a significant barrier to entry for seaglider operators.¹

Additionally, seaglider operators would have to receive the commission's approval before modifying their routes or changing the rates that they charge customers. This would make it difficult for seaglider operators to keep up with the rapid pace of change in an emerging market.

Furthermore, this measure would not cause safety risks for Hawaii residents who might use seagliders in the future. As the bill notes, the U.S. Coast Guard already has regulations in place to ensure the safe operation of seagliders, making further regulation by the state Public Utilities Commission unnecessary.

Seagliders could elevate the quality of life in Hawaii, but if we want them to take off, we need to give them enough room to extend their wings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ ["PUC Case 2004-0180,"](#) Hawaii Public Utilities Commission, accessed February 10, 2026.

Comments before
March 24, 2026
House Committee on Transportation

SUPPORTING
Senate Bill 2400
Relating to Seaglidern

Mike Ewall, Esq.
Founder & Executive Director
Energy Justice Network
215-436-9511
mike@energyjustice.net
www.EnergyJustice.net

Aloha Honorable Committee members. Energy Justice Network is a national organization supporting grassroots groups working to transition their communities from polluting and harmful energy and waste management practices to clean energy and zero waste solutions. In Hawai'i, we've been working with residents, members and member groups since our support and involvement was first solicited in 2015.

Please support Senate Bill 2400.

This is perhaps the most exciting development in clean transportation. Hawai'i relies heavily on air travel, resulting in high levels of fossil fuel consumption and resulting air pollution from aviation fuels.

The very misguided push toward biofuels and waste-based fuels threatens a different type of harm, with food vs. fuel pressure on land use when there is insufficient land and water for the state to be independent on either front, with only a tiny fraction of fuel needs being able to be produced in-state (the rest would be imported). Use of genetically modified crops and enzymes for biofuels poses additional biosecurity risks and increased herbicide uses. Flawed models make biofuels seem like a climate solution when they can actually be as bad or worse than fossil fuels due to indirect land use changes that climate scientists say the models get wrong. Waste-based fuels introduce toxicity issues and rely on experimental technologies that cannot operate economically or commercially.

Electrifying local air travel is the best solution. It skips the whole move to different burnable fuels, and avoids the costly problem that, under state law and the *Navahine F.* settlement, the state would be investing in two major transitions in under two decades: a shift from fossil fuels to biofuels and waste-based fuels, then another infrastructure change to electrofuels by 2045 because burnable carbon-based fuels are not zero emissions as required.

Seaglidern are already being explored in the state by the Hawaiian Seaglider Initiative. This is in partnership with the major airlines. See <https://www.hawaiiseaglider.org> and <https://www.hawaiiseaglider.org/april-press-release> (there are links to their social media at the bottom of the press release to follow their activities). Hawaiian Airlines announced this partnership four years ago in this press release: <https://thepointsguy.com/news/hawaiian-airlines-sea-gliders/>

The Regent Seaglider¹ seats 12 people so far, which is 12-15 times fewer than the planes typically used. Hawaiian Airlines uses a Boeing 717 (128 passengers) and Southwest uses a Boeing 737 MAX8 (175 passengers). Until they can seat more passengers, there would need to be more seaglidern to replace all interisland travel. To make this possible without congestion, there can be more departure and landing points, providing flexibility and convenience, as well as additional tourism economy opportunities.

¹ <https://www.regentcraft.com/seaglidern/viceroy>; see also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggK0vlqiSV4>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVMeSbgdOLO>, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-GP_0Cud98

As we point out in [our comments](#) on HDOT's [Draft Energy Security & Waste Reduction Plan](#), interisland travel can be fully electrified without having to have a 12-15-fold increase in aircraft and trips. Since many of the flights are surely for tourists, there are many who may not be in such a rush and might opt for a ferry between islands, which would be slower, but likely cheaper. It would allow for whale and dolphin watching and will reduce the numbers who have to be in planes. Prior controversies over the Super Ferry can hopefully be avoided. After all, plenty of cruise ships and cargo ships already go between the islands. Some passenger ships shouldn't make a major difference. These ferries can be fully electrified. There are already international cargo ships that have been electrified, some also using wind masts to harness wind power in a modern way. A combination of electric seaglidiers and electric ferries could replace all inter-island air travel, reducing emissions significantly, boosting tourism, providing more travel flexibility, offering more competition. It also skips the entire costly "double transition" that would risk building up a biofuel economy just to tear it down early to replace it within the 19 years we have until the 2045 deadline for carbon-free transportation.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Mike Ewall, Esq.
Executive Director, Energy Justice Network
Co-Chair, Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i



**HAWAI'I COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

STERLING HIGA
CHAIRPERSON

CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Statement of
CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
Executive Director
Hawai'i Community Development Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
S.B. 2400, S.D.1
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Chairperson Kila, Vice Chairperson Miyake and members of the Committee.

The Hawai'i Community Development Authority (HCDA) **supports S.B. 2400, S.D.1**, which exempts persons operating wing-in-ground craft from the application of the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act.

The HCDA supports such technology for resiliency, and alternative transportation possibilities for the state, especially if a terminal and port is located at Kewalo Basin Harbor, in Kaka'ako, Honolulu.

The HCDA is a member of the Hawai'i Seaglider Initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.



March 24, 2026

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
House Committee on Transportation

Re: SB 2400 SD1 – RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to support SB 2400 SD1, which exempts persons operating wing-in-ground craft from the application of the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act. Defines "wing-in-ground craft."

HMSA appreciates the legislature exploring new means and technologies, to increase access for our residents. Hawaii's unique geographic nature can exacerbate challenges in cost and timeliness for especially our neighbor island residents who require care on Oahu. We hope that sea gliders can be one of many solutions to address this need in our State.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure.

Sincerely,

Walden Au
Director of Government Relations



Hawai'i State House of Representatives

Committee on Transportation

SB2400 – Relating to Transportation

RE: Support of SB2400

March 24, 2026

Aloha Honorable Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

Hawaiian Council writes in **support of SB2400**, which expands sustainable transportation options that will better connect our pae 'āina and support Hawai'i's long-term community needs.

For many residents across Hawai'i, interisland transportation can be daunting and often acts as a barrier between our communities. Factors such as cost and travel time can limit access to essential resources and reduce overall efficiency. Seaglidors present a potential solution by introducing an all-electric, ocean-based transportation option that bridges the gap between traditional air and marine travel and offers a faster, more cost-effective, and economically accessible approach to interisland mobility.

This proposal also carries meaningful benefits for Hawai'i's workforce and essential services. Faster movement of people and supplies during natural disasters could strengthen emergency response efforts and improve the ability to address urgent needs across islands. In addition, new opportunities for education, workforce development, and higher-paying technical careers may emerge through the operation and maintenance of these services. Equally important, this initiative emphasizes a community-informed process that allows Hawai'i to signal innovation investment while ensuring that local communities have a voice in how these initiatives move forward.

As we prioritize the well-being of our people, we must also prioritize the well-being of our 'āina. Transportation remains one of Hawai'i's most challenging sectors to decarbonize, and electrified interisland mobility offers a promising tool to help reduce emissions while diversifying how residents travel. If even a portion of short-haul flights or cargo trips can shift to cleaner alternatives, Hawai'i can move closer to achieving its broader climate and sustainability goals.

For these reasons, Hawaiian Council respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB2400**. Mahalo for your commitment to responsible, innovative solutions that benefit both our people and our land.

Mālama pono,

Madelyn McKeague

Director of Advocacy, Hawaiian Council

HAWAIIANS ADVANCING HAWAI'I

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Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Transportation

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Date: March 24, 2026

Where: Conference Room 430

TESTIMONY

Kā'eo Duarte

Vice President, 'Āina Pauahi

RE: SB2400, SD1, Relating to Transportation

Aloha e ka Luna Ho'omalua Kila, ka Hope Luna Ho'omalua Miyake a me nā Lālā o ke Kōmike.

Kamehameha Schools appreciates this opportunity to **support SB2400, SD1**.

Kamehameha Schools appreciates innovative technologies that mālama our keiki, kūpuna, and lāhui. Seaglidors can provide an affordable interisland transportation option that strengthens connectivity across the pae 'āina. This innovation can help address transportation barriers that affect our island communities by improving access to healthcare, other essential services, 'ohana, and employment opportunities.

Founded in 1887 through the Will of Ke Ali'i Bernice Pauahi Pākī Bishop, Ke Kula 'o Kamehameha is a private, educational, charitable trust committed to empowering Native Hawaiians in perpetuity by improving the well-being of our people through education. We envision our haumāna, strong in E Ola!, grounded in Hawaiian and Christian values, succeeding in post-secondary education and contributing through 'ōiwi leadership to a thriving and self-determined lāhui.



March 19th 2026

Representative Darius Kila
Chair, House Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Room 403
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: SB2400

Aloha e Chair Kila, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Our islands must continue to seek innovative and sustainable alternatives for inter-island transportation, which is why I am in strong support of SB2400.

Regent Craft's seaglider technology directly addresses critical environmental concerns. It is fully electric, capable of utilizing renewable energy sources, and is projected to operate at approximately one-third the cost of conventional aviation and marine transportation options. This represents a significant opportunity to reduce emissions while improving affordability and efficiency.

Seagliders will also allow us to better serve underserved communities by expanding access through our harbor system, helping to alleviate congestion at our airports and providing more centralized points of access on each island. This flexibility enables the development of route structures that more effectively connect our islands to essential services such as healthcare, as well as supporting food sustainability and the delivery of fresher local products.

Allowing seagliders to operate exempt from Public Utilities Commission jurisdiction will foster a more competitive inter-island transportation environment—one that ultimately benefits the people of Hawai'i through increased options, improved access, and lower costs.

For these reasons, I strongly support SB2400 and respectfully ask for your leadership in advancing this measure so that our communities may benefit from this innovative alternative form of transportation.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Uchiyama
President & CEO
Hawaii Think Tank

And

Former President & CEO
Island Air

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. 2400, S.D. 1 RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Exempting Wing-in-Ground Craft from the Hawaii Water Carrier Act

To: House Committee on Transportation

From: Tony Nodine, Coordinator

Organization: North Kona Noise ACTION (NKNA)

Email: NorthKonaNoiseAction@gamblesbest.com

Location: Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

Position: **OPPOSE**

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

North Kona Noise ACTION (NKNA) respectfully opposes S.B. 2400, S.D. 1. This bill removes the only layer of state oversight applicable to wing-in-ground (WIG) craft operations—including public participation, rate review, environmental accountability, and interisland biosecurity coordination—and replaces it with nothing. It does so on behalf of a mainland corporation whose vehicle has not completed sustained flight, whose federal regulatory status remains contested between two agencies, and whose operations would impose new environmental, energy, and biosecurity risks on Hawaiian communities without any mechanism for those communities to participate in the process.

I. This Bill Opens an Unregulated Interisland Pathway for Invasive Species

Hawai'i's existing interisland biosecurity framework depends on the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine Branch inspecting passengers and cargo at airports and harbors. HDOA inspectors at airports enforce quarantines on the movement of regulated materials between islands—including the current restrictions on coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) host materials.

S.B. 2400 would enable a new commercial interisland passenger transportation service operating from harbors—entirely outside the airport inspection infrastructure. The bill contains no provision requiring coordination with HDOA, no biosecurity inspection protocol for seaglider passengers or cargo, and no mechanism to prevent the interisland movement of invasive species through this new pathway.

This is not a theoretical concern. CRB is actively spreading across West Hawai'i right now. The beetle was first confirmed near Kona International Airport and within the Keāhole Agricultural Park in March 2025. As of late 2025, a large breeding site of approximately 90 grubs was discovered in Makalei Estates—in our community. CRB larvae have been found in commercially sold bags of soil and compost shipped from

O‘ahu. The Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture has interim rules restricting the movement of CRB host materials, and the County of Hawai‘i has maintained a voluntary compliance order in West Hawai‘i through April 2026. At the same time, the Hawai‘i Wildlife Fund and Pōhaku Pelemaka have petitioned the Board of Agriculture for mandatory containment rules.

Against this backdrop, the Legislature is being asked to clear the way for a new interisland transportation mode that bypasses the very inspection infrastructure designed to prevent exactly this kind of spread. Passengers boarding a seaglider at a Honolulu harbor would not pass through HDOA airport inspection. Cargo carried on seaglider routes would not be subject to existing interisland quarantine enforcement. This is an unacceptable gap, and the bill makes no attempt to address it.

II. This Bill Eliminates State Oversight and Cuts Out the Public

Under the Hawaii Water Carrier Act, a commercial operator carrying passengers between islands must obtain a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) from the PUC. That process provides rate oversight, route accountability, and structured public participation including formal hearings and the right to file complaints. S.B. 2400 eliminates the entire framework and replaces it with nothing. Specifically, the bill creates a regulatory void in which a commercial passenger service could operate across Hawaiian waters with:

1. No state authority over passenger fares or fare increases;
2. No state review of routes, schedules, or service modifications;
3. No public hearing requirement before operations begin or expand;
4. No state mechanism for communities to file formal complaints about noise, environmental harm, or operational impacts;
5. No state-level environmental review of harbor infrastructure, charging facilities, or operational corridors.

The bill’s rationale—that WIG craft are “subject to federal safety oversight”—confuses safety certification with comprehensive regulation. The U.S. Coast Guard certifies that a vessel is structurally sound. It does not regulate fares, routes, environmental impacts, community noise, energy demand, or biosecurity. Coastal communities that would host these operations—including communities in North Kona, Kawaihae, and elsewhere on Hawai‘i Island—deserve a formal seat at the table. This bill denies them that.

It is telling that S.B. 2400 received zero opposition testimony in the Senate. Not because there are no concerns, but because the public was largely unaware that a bill to deregulate a transportation mode that does not yet exist was moving through the Legislature. Hawai‘i learned this lesson with the Superferry: the rushed removal of regulatory process for an interisland transportation venture—without adequate environmental review or public input—resulted in litigation, community conflict, and the failure of the service. This bill repeats that pattern.

III. The Decarbonization Claim Does Not Withstand Scrutiny

The Committee Report states that seaglidings support “the State’s long-term decarbonization and economic diversification goals.” This framing is premature and misleading:

1. **The craft does not exist in production form.** REGENT’s manufacturing facility in Rhode Island is still under construction. The full-scale prototype sustained structural damage during testing in October 2025 when its wing struck the water. Certification, production, and operational testing all remain ahead. The Legislature is pre-clearing regulatory exemptions for a vehicle that has not completed sustained flight.
2. **Battery-electric is not zero-carbon on Hawai‘i Island’s grid.** Hawaiian Electric on Hawai‘i Island still relies substantially on fossil-fuel generation. Each island has its own independent electrical grid with no inter-island connections. Calling a battery-electric craft “zero-emission” while charging it from a grid that burns oil is accounting fraud, not decarbonization. True carbon accounting must include upstream generation, lithium battery manufacturing, and the energy required for harbor charging infrastructure.
3. **Harbor charging imposes new grid demand on island ratepayers with no review.** The Hawai‘i Seaglider Initiative proposes two ports per island, each requiring substantial electrical capacity for rapid turnaround of a commercial vehicle operating at 180 mph. This is significant new demand on island grids. The PUC—which oversees Hawai‘i’s energy transition and renewable portfolio standards—would have been the appropriate body to evaluate whether this demand aligns with or undermines decarbonization goals. This bill ensures that evaluation never happens. The costs will instead be socialized to island ratepayers through grid infrastructure upgrades, with no public process.
4. **No Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared.** The Seaglider Initiative itself has acknowledged that an EIS will be necessary. Yet this bill removes state regulatory jurisdiction before that study is even scoped. Deregulating first and studying impacts later is precisely backward.
5. **Marine life impacts are unaddressed.** Seaglidings would operate at 30–60 feet above the ocean at up to 180 mph through critical humpback whale breeding habitat (November–April). Humpback whales can breach to heights approaching 50 feet—directly into the seaglider’s operating altitude. At 180 mph, the craft covers approximately 264 feet per second, leaving virtually zero reaction time. The hydrofoil phases generate significant underwater acoustic disturbance during takeoff and landing in harbor areas. No study of these specific acoustic or strike-risk impacts has been conducted for Hawaiian waters.
6. **Lithium battery safety in marine saltwater environments is untested at this scale.** Electric vehicles have experienced catastrophic battery fires after saltwater exposure. Operating lithium battery-powered craft in a marine environment—including potential emergency water landings—raises safety and

environmental contamination questions that have not been evaluated for Hawaiian waters.

7. **Federal regulatory jurisdiction remains unsettled.** The FAA has not confirmed it will defer entirely to the Coast Guard and continues to refer to seaglidors as “aircraft.” If the FAA asserts jurisdiction—requiring full type certification—the entire economic model collapses. The State should not dismantle its own oversight framework for an industry whose federal regulatory status is actively contested between two agencies.

IV. This Bill Serves a Mainland Corporation at Hawai‘i’s Expense

REGENT Craft Inc. is a Rhode Island-based startup that has raised over \$90 million from mainland investors including Founders Fund, Lockheed Martin, and 8090 Industries. It has a reported order backlog of over \$9 billion. It is pursuing certification as a maritime vessel specifically to avoid the rigor and cost of FAA aircraft certification.

S.B. 2400 asks the State of Hawai‘i to pre-clear regulatory exemptions for this mainland corporation before it has delivered a single production vehicle, completed sustained flight, resolved its federal regulatory status, conducted an environmental impact study, or established any biosecurity protocol for its Hawaiian operations. In exchange, Hawai‘i’s communities would bear the environmental costs (marine life disruption, harbor noise, new grid demand from fossil-fuel-powered charging), the biosecurity risks (an unregulated interisland pathway during an active CRB crisis), and the loss of all public process rights—while the profits flow to mainland investors.

This pattern—mainland entities extracting value from Hawai‘i while externalizing costs to residents and ecosystems—is familiar enough that it should give every member of this Committee pause. If seaglider technology truly delivers on its promises, it will succeed with appropriate state oversight in place. If it cannot operate under the same regulatory framework that applies to every other commercial water carrier in Hawai‘i, that itself is informative.

V. The Precedent Is Dangerous

If this bill passes, it establishes a template: any novel transportation technology can argue that federal safety oversight is sufficient and that state regulation is merely a “barrier to entry.” This precedent could be cited by eVTOL operators, autonomous vessel companies, or other emerging technologies seeking to bypass state environmental and consumer protections. The Legislature should be extremely cautious about setting this precedent.

VI. Requested Action

We respectfully urge the Committee to hold S.B. 2400, S.D. 1. If the Committee is inclined to advance a version of this measure, we request at minimum:

1. Condition the PUC exemption on the prior completion of an Environmental Impact Statement for seaglider operations in Hawaiian waters, including

assessment of marine mammal strike risk, underwater acoustic impacts, and harbor infrastructure effects;

2. Require mandatory coordination with the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to establish biosecurity inspection protocols for seaglider passengers and cargo before any interisland operations commence, ensuring parity with existing airport-based interisland quarantine enforcement;
3. Require public notice and community hearings in each county where seaglider launch and landing facilities are proposed, prior to the commencement of operations;
4. Establish a state-level reporting requirement for seaglider operators covering noise, marine life incidents, safety events, energy consumption, and biosecurity compliance;
5. Require resolution of the FAA/Coast Guard jurisdictional question before any state exemption takes effect;
6. Include a sunset clause of no more than five years, with mandatory legislative review before renewal.

Innovation should not come at the expense of accountability. Hawai'i's communities, marine ecosystems, agricultural biosecurity, and energy systems deserve better than a blank check written for a mainland corporation that has not yet demonstrated it can operate safely in the environment it proposes to serve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Nodine

Coordinator, North Kona Noise ACTION

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

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SB-2400-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 8:49:01 AM

Testimony for TRN on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Puaoi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair,

I am in support of this bill for I work closely with the Sea Glider project and see the effects of it and it is heavily regulated under the US Coast Guard. I hope this bill passes so we can bring the Sea Glider to the people of Hawaii.

Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

FROM: Cindy Kanani Freitas, Native Hawaiian Practitioner, Hawai‘i Island (Holualoa, Hawai‘i)

RE: SB2400 – Relating to Transportation; Hawaii Water Carriers Act; Wing-in-Ground Craft

POSITION: STRONG OPPOSITION

HEARING DATE: March 24, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Cindy Kanani Freitas. I am a Native Hawaiian descended from the po‘e of these islands prior to 1778, and I am a practitioner of traditional and customary practices taught by my kūpuna, from **mauka to makai**.

I stand in **strong opposition** to SB2400.

This bill proposes to exempt “wing-in-ground craft” (seaglidors) from the Hawai‘i Water Carriers Act. What it truly does is remove the State’s responsibility to protect our ocean—the very space that feeds, connects, and sustains our people.

II. ‘IKE KŪPUNA – THE OCEAN IS NOT EMPTY SPACE

In our ‘ike kūpuna, the ocean is not just water it is **‘āina**, it is **ancestor**, it is **pathway**, and it is **source of life**.

Our kūpuna understood:

- The ocean is a **living system**, not a transportation corridor
- Our practices fishing, gathering limu, wayfinding, canoe travel—are tied to specific places and conditions
- Disturbance in one area affects the entire system

There is a well-known ‘ōlelo no‘eau:

“He ali‘i ka ‘āina, he kauwā ke kanaka.”

The land (and ocean) is chief, and we are its servants.

This bill reverses that relationship by placing **industry above ‘āina**.

III. MO‘OLELO AND PRACTICE – MAUKA TO MAKAI CONNECTION

From my upbringing and practices:

- The currents, winds, and nearshore waters are known, observed, and respected
- Canoe pathways and fishing grounds are not random they are **ancestral knowledge systems**
- Nearshore areas (where these crafts would operate) are the same areas used for:
 - Subsistence fishing
 - Gathering

- Cultural practices
- Keiki learning from kūpuna

Introducing unregulated, fast-moving vessels into these areas without oversight disrupts:

- Traditional navigation patterns
- Fishing practices
- The safety of practitioners on the water

This is not theoretical this is lived ‘ike.

IV. LEGAL DUTY TO PROTECT CULTURAL PRACTICES

(Hawai‘i Constitution, Article XII, Section 7)

The State is required to protect traditional and customary Native Hawaiian rights.

Ka Pa ‘akai O Ka ‘Āina v. Land Use Comm’n (2000) requires:

1. Identification of practices
2. Assessment of impacts
3. Mitigation before approval

SB2400 does none of this.

There is:

- No cultural impact assessment
- No consultation with practitioners
- No safeguards for traditional use areas

This is a direct failure of constitutional duty.

V. PUBLIC TRUST – OCEAN AS A SHARED RESOURCE

(Hawai‘i Constitution, Article XI)

Our ocean is part of the **public trust**, not a private transportation zone.

Waiāhole Ditch (2000) confirms:

The State must actively protect these resources for present and future generations.

In Hawaiian understanding, this aligns with:

- **Mālama ‘āina** – care for the land and ocean
- **Kuleana** – responsibility to protect what feeds us

SB2400 removes that protection.

VI. CULTURAL AND PRACTICAL IMPACTS

Without regulation, these crafts may:

- Interfere with traditional fishing areas
- Disrupt nearshore ecosystems where limu and fish are gathered
- Create unsafe conditions for:
 - Canoe paddlers
 - Fishermen
 - Cultural practitioners

These are not just “users”—these are **rights protected under the Constitution.**

VII. DEEP CONCERN – DECISIONS WITHOUT COMMUNITY

This bill reflects a pattern:

- Decisions made before consultation
- Technology introduced before understanding place
- Cultural impacts treated as secondary

But in Hawai‘i, place matters.

‘A‘ole kāia he wahi ma‘alahi this is not an empty place.

Every shoreline, every current, every fishing ground has history and meaning.

VIII. CONCLUSION

SB2400:

- Removes State responsibility over public trust waters
- Fails to protect Native Hawaiian practices
- Ignores ‘ike kūpuna and lived experience
- Prioritizes industry over ‘āina and community

For these reasons, I respectfully urge this Committee to **REJECT SB2400.**

IX. FINAL STATEMENT (CULTURAL CLOSING)

“Our kūpuna did not see the ocean as a space to be exempted from responsibility. They understood it as a living ancestor. If the State removes its duty to protect it, then who will stand for it?”

Mahalo,

Cindy Kanani Freitas

SB-2400-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:41:37 PM

Testimony for TRN on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, COMMENT

MIGRATION OF MARINE LIFE PATTERNS FROM ISLAND TO ISLAND?

2400 SB RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Written Testimony in Favor of Sea Glider Service in the State of Hawaii

To Whom it May Concern:

Please accept this written testimony in favor of and in support of the proposed Sea Glider service in the State of Hawaii.

The flight service proposed by Sea Glider will bring a low cost, energy efficient travel and freight solution direly needed into Hawaii; especially to underserved Islands such as Molokai. Everything is more expensive in Hawaii and with the catastrophic merger between Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines, the cost of interisland travel is becoming unreliable and more expensive. It is time to consider services as proposed by Sea Glider into serious consideration and to remove any and all roadblocks that the State traditionally places in front of new ideas and technologies. We need to support the efforts of those that bring nontraditional remedies to age problems.

Mahalo,

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