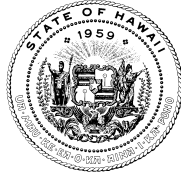


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawaii*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawaii*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawaii'i

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TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY
AND WATER AND LAND
ON APRIL 15, 2026 AT 11:15AM IN CR 411

**SCR180, URGING STATE AGENCIES THAT OWN OR CONTROL LAND IN WEST
MAUI TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE AGGRESSIVE VEGETATION
MANAGEMENT, FUEL REDUCTION, DEFENSIBLE SPACE, AND EMERGENCY
ACCESS MEASURES TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK TO LAHAINA AND
SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES**

April 15, 2026

Aloha Chairs Belatti and Hashem, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Morikawa, and members of the Committees:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this resolution urging State agencies that own or control land in West Maui to implement and enforce aggressive vegetation management, fuel reduction, defensible space, and emergency access measures to reduce wildfire risk to Lahaina and surrounding communities.

The 2023 Lahaina wildfire underscored the growing wildfire threat throughout Hawaii. Many DHHL subdivisions are located in high-risk areas and are surrounded by unmanaged fuels and dry vegetation. DHHL supports HB1800, which adds the Governor's budgeted \$2 million Green Fee award to DHHL for wildfire mitigation and community resilience initiatives serving Native Hawaiian homestead communities statewide. DHHL urgently needs these funds to address significant wildfire risks across its homelands. The Green Fee funding will support both large-scale land management strategies and homestead-based wildfire preparedness efforts.

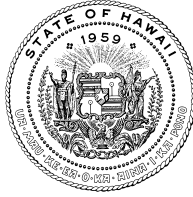
DHHL has identified five priority mitigation projects including maintenance of the Leiali'i Parkway landscape in Maui. These projects focus on fuel reduction, firebreak maintenance, erosion control, and vegetation management in high-risk DHHL homestead areas. The Green Fee will also support two community initiatives in partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO). First, a DHHL-dedicated Firewise Support Specialist will assist 15-20 homestead communities through the Firewise USA© certification process by providing technical assistance, risk

assessments, workshops, and mitigation planning support. Second, DHHL will fund 10-15 Homestead Community-Led Wildfire Mitigation projects through grants of \$5,000-\$10,000 per community for defensible space, brush clearing, vegetation removal, and evacuation route maintenance. Participating communities will form Firewise committees and contribute volunteer labor or in-kind support. These investments align with the goals of Act 96, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, to strengthen Hawaii's resilience to climate-driven disasters.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



DEAN MINAKAMI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

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Statement of

DEAN MINAKAMI

Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

AND

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

April 15, 2026 at 11:15 a.m.

State Capitol, Room 411

In consideration of

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 180

URGING STATE AGENCIES THAT OWN OR CONTROL LAND IN WEST MAUI TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE AGGRESSIVE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT, FUEL REDUCTION, DEFENSIBLE SPACE, AND EMERGENCY ACCESS MEASURES TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK TO LAHAINA AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

Chairs Au Belatti and Hashem, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Morikawa, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC **supports** Senate Concurrent Resolution 180, which urges state agencies that own or control land in West Maui to implement and enforce aggressive vegetation management, fuel reduction, defensible space, and emergency access measures to reduce wildfire risk to Lahaina and surrounding communities.

As noted in the measure, HHFDC controls substantial lands in the Lahaina area, including the Villages of Leialii, which encompass roughly 1,128 acres of state-owned land mauka of the Lahaina Civic Center.

Public safety is of utmost importance to HHFDC. We recognize the urgency of reducing hazardous vegetation and strengthening defensible space around residential communities, temporary housing areas for wildfire survivors, schools, and major evacuation routes. We are committed to working closely with the Office of the State Fire Marshal, DLNR, DHHL, DOE, DAGS, the County of Maui, and other partners to meet the expectations set forth in this resolution.

Since the 2023 wildfires, HHFDC has expanded firebreaks on our lands in Lahaina that border developed lands. We note, however, that maintenance of the firebreaks comes at additional

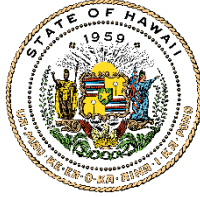
cost, and implementing additional measures such as ground clearing and wide-scale vegetation management would require substantial dedicated funding and possibly additional field personnel and contract management staff.

With appropriate resources, HHFDC is prepared to support the full scope of the directives of this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
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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 House Committees on
PUBLIC SAFETY
and
WATER AND LAND

Wednesday April 5, 2026
11:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 180

Senate Concurrent Resolution 180 urges state agencies that own or manage lands in West Maui to adopt and implement robust vegetation management, fuel reduction, defensible space, and emergency access measures to reduce wildfire risk to Lahaina and surrounding communities. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) agrees with the intent of this resolution and offers the following comments.**

The Department supports proactive fuel reduction, defensible space, and improved access and egress, as these are critical components of a comprehensive wildfire risk reduction strategy and align with ongoing efforts across state and county agencies.

The Department of the Attorney General has engaged the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization to develop a statewide wildfire action plan based on recommendations from the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI). This effort represents a coordinated, science-based approach to reducing wildfire risk across Hawai'i. The Department recommends that the actions proposed in this resolution align with FSRI's recommendations and be guided by the forthcoming statewide wildfire action plan, which will serve as the primary framework for prioritizing and implementing mitigation efforts. This alignment will help ensure consistency across agencies, focus resources on the highest-risk areas, and maximize the effectiveness of limited funding.

Wildfire risk must be addressed at a landscape scale. While the resolution focuses on agency-managed lands, effective mitigation requires coordinated action across state, county, and private lands, as well as the establishment and long-term maintenance of strategic fuel treatments. The Department supports efforts that promote cross-boundary coordination and sustained management over time.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.