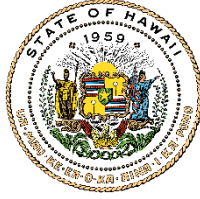


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GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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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

Wednesday April 8, 2026
1:05 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 170
and
SENATE RESOLUTION 161

Senate Concurrent Resolution 170 and Senate Resolution 161 support establishing a sister-state relationship with Aotearoa New Zealand to promote biosecurity, conservation, the protection of endangered species, and other shared concerns. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

The Department supports this measure because sharing information and practices related to biosecurity, conservation, the protection of native species, and the use of traditional ecological knowledge benefits both Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand are both island ecosystems home to a wide variety of endemic birds, plants, and insects that are vulnerable to threats like predation by introduced mammals, new diseases, and competition from non-native flora and fauna. Both regions share histories rooted in rich indigenous cultures that are deeply connected to land stewardship and resource management. Aotearoa New Zealand enforces strict biosecurity protocols at entry points to safeguard its taonga, a term meaning treasures that encompass the country's natural and cultural treasures. These measures include declarations, inspections, and hefty fines for violations. Locally, Aotearoa New Zealand actively protects its native species through predator-control strategies that have been developed and refined over time, including legislation, education, and nationwide outreach. The country's Department of Conservation works to incorporate te ao Māori, an indigenous worldview, into its planning and conservation practices.

The Department supports developing a partnership with the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Primary Industries, which oversees Biosecurity. The Department contacted the State of Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) about forming such a partnership, and DBEDT recommended that the Department draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the terms. The Department is currently discussing establishing a partnership with the Department of Conservation through an MOU.

The Department recommends amending the measure's title to align with DBEDT guidance:

~~[SUPPORTING]~~ SUPPORT ~~[THE ESTABLISHMENT OF]~~ ESTABLISHING A ~~[SISTER STATE RELATIONSHIP]~~ PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW ZEALAND TO ADVANCE BIOSECURITY, CONSERVATION, PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES, AND OTHER ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN.

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



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKĀ'I

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION

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Statement of
Dennis T. Ling
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
1:05 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
SR161

**SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SISTER STATE RELATIONSHIP WITH
NEW ZEALAND TO ADVANCE BIOSECURITY, CONSERVATION, PROTECTION OF
ENDANGERED SPECIES, AND OTHER ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN.**

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the Committee, the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports **SR 161**, which supports the establishment of a sister state relationship with New Zealand to advance biosecurity, conservation, protection of endangered species, and other issues of mutual concern.

New Zealand and Hawai'i share deep connections as Pacific island communities with strong indigenous heritage, cultural leadership, and environmental stewardship. Both face ongoing threats from invasive species, habitat loss, and biodiversity decline—challenges that endanger ecosystems, agricultural sustainability, and native wildlife.

New Zealand is recognized globally as a leader in biosecurity and conservation, maintaining an integrated system of prevention, management, and eradication of harmful pests and diseases. Its model includes coordinated border control, domestic

monitoring, and community-driven protection strategies that keep its native species and ecosystems resilient.

New Zealand's network of 35 protected sanctuaries, such as the pioneering Zealandia sanctuary in Wellington, demonstrates the effectiveness of predator-exclusion areas that allow native birds, reptiles, and plants to recover and thrive. These examples offer proven frameworks that can help Hawai'i expand and strengthen its own endangered species recovery and native habitat restoration efforts.

Additionally, the New Zealand FoodBowl, a food innovation network that brings together expertise, technologies, and infrastructure for food innovators and entrepreneurs, is the model on which Hawai'i's Food and Product Innovation Network (FPIN) is being developed.

A formal cooperative relationship would create new opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaborative research, policy innovation, and shared environmental strategies. This partnership would contribute directly to Hawai'i's ongoing work in biosecurity, conservation, climate resilience, food and product innovation—areas vital to our islands' long-term ecological and economic well-being.

Since New Zealand is a country and its subnational governments are not equivalent to states or provinces, DBEDT supports exploring a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Hawai'i and New Zealand.

It should be noted that HB2474 HD1 SD1 seeks to broaden the State's authority to enter into nonbinding international cooperative agreements which goes beyond traditional sister-state partnerships by enabling collaboration with national governments, ministries, and regional organizations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Passage of this legislation would strengthen Hawai'i's ability to enter a global partnership with New Zealand.

For these reasons, DBEDT is pleased to support SR 161 and the establishment of an international cooperative agreement between the State of Hawai'i and New Zealand.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.