

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2563

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 20 2026

RE: S.B. No. 17
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Public Safety and Military Affairs and Water, Land, Culture and the Arts, to which was referred S.B. No. 17 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO WILDFIRE MITIGATION,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish the Wildfire Mitigation Working Group;
- (2) Require a report to the Legislature;
- (3) Require the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to provide administrative support to the working group; and
- (4) Appropriate funds.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Transportation, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Public Utilities Commission, State Fire Council, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Office of the State Fire Marshal, Nature Conservancy Hawai'i and Palmyra, Kamehameha Schools, Hawaiian Electric, and one individual.



Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of the Attorney General and Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Your Committees find that the State has a critical need for coordinated efforts in wildfire mitigation. The 2023 Maui wildfires that devastated entire communities underscores the consequences of unmanaged fuels, climate-driven drought, limited evacuation pathways, and gaps in land-use planning. Moreover, wildfires constitute a growing threat to the State's native ecosystems and biodiversity by threatening native forests that are ill-adapted for fire. When these forests are damaged or destroyed by wildfires, invasive species often spread. This measure will bring together key stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategies for reducing wildfire risks, improving public safety, and protecting the State's natural resources and critical infrastructure.

Your Committees note that a working group that draws from a broad spectrum of government, technical, and community stakeholders would allow for a multifaceted strategy to confront the risk of wildfires. To ensure broad participation in the working group, further amendments are necessary.

Accordingly, your Committees have amended this measure by:

- (1) Establishing the working group in the Department of Law Enforcement, to be administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal;
- (2) Requiring the working group to be comprised of subcommittees and identify clear deliverables;
- (3) Requiring the working group to integrate cultural stewardship and the development of certified wildfire resilience and stewardship standards that encourage good-faith compliance and responsible land management and provide clear, legally defensible guidance for the State's communities;
- (4) Expanding the working group's membership to include the following:



- (A) The chairperson of the Public Utilities Commission or their designee;
 - (B) A representative of the State Fire Council, rather than the Fire Chief of each county;
 - (C) A Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner, to be invited by the chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources; and
 - (D) A large landowner, to be invited by the State Fire Marshall;
- (5) Replacing the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development with the Office of the State Fire Marshal as the entity responsible for providing administrative support to the working group;
 - (6) Extending the deadline for the working group to submit a report to the Legislature to thirty days prior to the Regular Session of 2028;
 - (7) Appropriating funds to the Office of the State Fire Marshall, rather than the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, for administrative expenses of the working group;
 - (8) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
 - (9) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

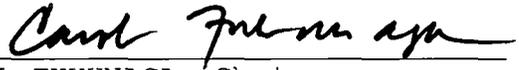
As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Public Safety and Military Affairs and Water, Land, Culture and the Arts that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 17, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 17, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Public Safety and
Military Affairs and Water,
Land, Culture and the Arts,



CHRIS LEE, Chair



CAROL FUKUNAGA, Chair



