

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2600

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 20 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2002
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 Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Public Safety and Military Affairs, to which was referred S.B. No. 2002 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO WATER,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Allow the Commission on Water Resources Management (CWRM) to retain independent counsel;
- (2) Repeal the First Deputy to the Chairperson of the CWRM;
- (3) Establish the Executive Director of the CWRM;
- (4) Administratively attach the CWRM to the Department of the Land and Natural Resources;
- (5) Authorize members of the CWRM to be eligible to serve as chairperson;
- (6) Require the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Director of Health to serve as ex officio voting members who are ineligible to serve as chairperson;



- (7) Add one member to the nominating committee for the CWRM, to be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
- (8) Authorize entities to whom an emergency order is directed to challenge the order under certain conditions;
- (9) Clarify the notification requirements and contents of declarations of water shortages;
- (10) Establish fines; and
- (11) Make conforming amendments.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Board of Water Supply of the City and County of Honolulu, Sierra Club of Hawai'i, Life of the Land, Earthjustice, Hawai'i Food+ Policy; Lāhainā Strong, Save Honolulu Coalition, and forty-eight individuals.

Your Committees received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Department of the Attorney General.

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

Your Committees find that certain administrative structures of the Commission on Water Resources Management (CWRM) create inherent conflicts and dependencies that impair its critical function of comprehensive water planning and management, underscored recently in the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires. Your Committees further find that recommendations for an autonomous CWRM were submitted to the State over thirty years ago. This measure will ensure the independence of the CWRM and protect it from political interference, as well as update outdated policy in the State Water Code, to best position the CWRM to fulfill its mandated responsibilities for the people of the State.

Your Committees note the concern expressed by Earthjustice that the Commission on Water Resources Management has repeatedly been deprived of effective counsel or denied legal representation altogether at critical times throughout its history. Accordingly,



your Committees respectfully request that subsequent Committees to which this measure is referred consider this issue.

Your Committees have amended this measure by 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 Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Public Safety and Military Affairs that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2002, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2002, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committees on Judiciary and Ways and Means.

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



CAROL FUKUNAGA, Chair

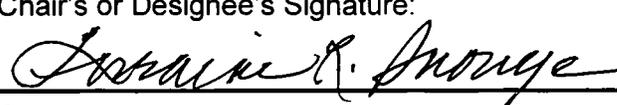


CHRIS LEE, Chair



The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
WLA

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:		
SB 2002	WLA/PSM, JDC/WAM	2-4-2026		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
LEE, Chris (C)	✓			
INOUYE, Lorraine R. (VC)	✓			
CHANG, Stanley	✓			
LAMOSAO, Rachele	✓			
DECORTE, Samantha	✓			
TOTAL	5			
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink File with Committee Report Committee Drafting Agency				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes

