

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

2417

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 19 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2983
S.D. 1

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

Sir:

Your Committee on Government Operations, to which was referred S.B. No. 2983 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO NATURAL RESOURCES,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to establish the offense of criminal destruction of a tree on state or county property, punishable as a misdemeanor.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from Trees for Honolulu's Future and two individuals.

Your Committee finds that trees create multiple benefits, including providing shade, lowering temperature through evapotranspiration, recharging groundwater, decreasing surface runoff, trapping pollutants, and storing carbon dioxide. While some of the recent loss of the State's tree canopy may be attributed to legal removal for a variety of reasons, your Committee believes unequivocally that malicious damage that results in the loss of a tree is unacceptable and should be criminally penalized. This measure will create accountability for and deter the illegal destruction of trees on state or county property, helping to preserve natural landscapes that benefit and enrich the State.



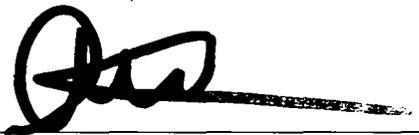
Your Committee acknowledges concerns that this measure could unintentionally subject individuals to criminal penalties for removing albizia or other invasive or noxious trees. Accordingly, should your Committee on Judiciary choose to deliberate on the measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it review this issue and consider any necessary amendments to ensure that lawful invasive species removal is not penalized as criminal destruction of trees.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of January 1, 2525, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Government Operations that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2983, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2983, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Judiciary.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Government
Operations,



ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, Chair



