



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

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

**House Committee on Finance**

Monday, March 02, 2026

2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

**In Support**

**House Bill No. 1615, HD1, Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of the Governor **supports** House Bill No. 1615, HD1. This bill declares the State an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation; creates and funds a Marine Affairs Coordinator position; transfers the functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs; and appropriates funds for consultant support to advance the marine affairs declaration of intent.

Hawai'i's identity, economy, and long-term resilience are inseparable from the ocean. Our ocean economy spans commercial fisheries, maritime transportation, ocean science, defense, renewable energy, tourism, and coastal resilience, and is grounded in generations of Native Hawaiian stewardship and knowledge. This unique convergence of culture, geography, and innovation positions Hawai'i as a global leader in sustainable ocean development.

The Office of the Governor believes that establishing an Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation will provide the focused leadership necessary to harness that advantage. A centralized Office will drive coordinated action across state agencies, research institutions, and private-sector partners. Strategic support through a consultant will accelerate implementation and strengthen Hawai'i's competitiveness for federal research funding and private investment.

By strengthening coordination and focus, this measure advances economic diversification, supports workforce development, and reinforces responsible ocean stewardship. It positions Hawai'i to compete globally while remaining grounded in our values and environmental responsibilities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

## TESTIMONY WITH COMMENTS ON HB1615 HD1

RELATING TO TITLE THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

House Committee on Finance  
Hawai'i State Capitol

March 2, 2026

2:00pm

Room 308

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Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi , and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS** on **HB1615 HD1**, which, in relevant part for OHA, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (Corporation), and names OHA as member of the marine affairs task force.

**OHA appreciates being named as a member of the marine affairs task force and if this measure is passed OHA willingly accepts this kuleana.** OHA has a long history of protecting ocean resources including by serving as a Co-Trustee of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and Co-Manager of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Sanctuary. OHA is also statutorily charged with “[a]ssessing the policies and practices of other agencies impacting on native Hawaiians and Hawaiians.” HRS § 10-3. Finally, OHA has implemented a variety of programs to support its beneficiaries pursuing marine career pathways. Therefore, OHA has experience and expertise directly relevant to the goals and mandate of the proposed Office of Marine Affairs.

**At the same time, OHA is concerned that as written the bill unduly prioritizes economic development goals over conservation and preservation mandates.** While the bill tasks the Office of Marine Affairs with developing a statewide strategy “that prioritizes the sustainable use, conservation, and stewardship of marine resources”, page 5 at lines 18-21, the remainder of the Office’s and coordinator’s enumerated duties appear to exclusively focus on economic development goals.

Moreover, “Blue economy” is defined in the bill as “industrial and economic activities” that preserve “the health of oceanic and aquatic ecosystems.” Page 4 line 20 to page 5 line2. However, industries included in the definition such as energy, aquaculture, and fisheries do not always preserve the health of oceanic ecosystems. On the contrary, individual projects and industries differ greatly in their impacts on human communities

and natural ecosystems, and governing permits and regulations must include specific conditions and restrictions to minimize negative impacts on culture and the environment.

Accordingly, as one step towards ensuring greater balance in this bill, OHA respectfully request the following amendments to the coordinator's enumerated duties at page 11, line 12:

"determine financial requirements for the ~~total and~~ optimum development of the State's marine resources based on the goals and needs of the State, consistent with constitutional and statutory mandates related to natural resource protection."

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**OFFICE OF ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION**  
**KE KE'ENA HO'OMOHALA WAIWAI**  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

711 KAPIOLANI BLVD., 12TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
PHONE: (808) 768-2330 • FAX: (808) 768-4242 • WEBSITE: [revitalizeoahu.org](http://revitalizeoahu.org)

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



AMY ASSELBAYE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PO'O HO'OKŌ

DEBORAH ZYSMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

March 2, 2026

The Honorable, Chris Todd, Chair,  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice-Chair,  
and Members of the Committee on Finance  
State of Hawai'i Senate  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 225  
Honolulu, HI, 96813

SUBJECT: Honolulu Office of Economic Revitalization Support for House Bill 1615 HD1 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Dear Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

The Office of Economic Revitalization supports HB1615 HD1.

This measure advances economic diversification by investing in strategic planning for Hawaii's ocean and blue economy, an emerging sector with strong potential for high-wage jobs, innovation, and federal and private investment. By enabling HTDC to engage expert support, the bill helps accelerate coordinated efforts across industry, workforce development, and commercialization.

HB1615 also supports workforce alignment by encouraging pathways that prepare local residents for careers in ocean technology, sustainability, and applied research. This approach creates new opportunities beyond traditional industries while strengthening long-term economic resilience.

For these reasons, OER supports HB1615 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Amy Asselbaye  
Executive Director

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB1615 HD1 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii (“The Chamber”). The Chamber testifies in strong support of House Bill 1615 House Draft 1 (HB1615 HD1), which declares that the State is an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai’i Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes only; establishes and appropriates funds for the Marine Affairs Coordinator position; requires the Marine Affairs Coordinator to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature; transfers the functions of the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs; and appropriates funds for the Office of Marine Affairs to procure the services of a consultant to support the marine affairs declaration of intent.

HB1615 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Small Business. This bill promotes the growth of Hawaii’s blue economy, encompassing industries such as marine technology, offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, ocean data systems, and marine robotics—all sectors that can build a stronger, more resilient Hawaii economy.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the global ocean economy could exceed \$3 trillion by 2030. With Hawaii’s strategic geographic position in the Pacific, access to world-class ocean research assets, and a talented local workforce, the State is well-positioned to serve as a regional hub for these emerging industries. According to analyses by UHERO, innovation-driven sectors provide higher-than-average wages and greater economic stability. Developing a blue economy will not only diversify our industries beyond tourism—which still accounts for 17.1% of the State’s GDP (2023)—but also generate new, high-skill jobs for local residents.

Furthermore, Hawaii currently imports about 85–90% of its food and about 67% of its energy (2024). Expanding ocean innovation in areas like offshore renewable energy and sustainable aquaculture supports State goals to reduce dependence on imports, enhance food and energy security, and work towards reaching 100% clean energy by 2045.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1615 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Written Statement of  
**Trung Lam, Executive Director**

before the  
House Committee on Finance

Monday, March 2, 2026  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
HB1615  
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

As the state agency charged with advancing Hawai'i's technology sector and fostering innovation-driven economic development, the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) recognizes the critical importance of the blue economy and marine innovation to the state's future. HB1615 HD1 is significant to HTDC's mission, as it establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC and creates new opportunities to coordinate, develop, and accelerate Hawai'i's leadership in ocean-based sectors.

The bill's declaration that Hawai'i is an ocean cluster aligns with globally recognized best practices for catalyzing regional economic growth around key industries. The creation of a Marine Affairs Coordinator position and provision for consultant services further strengthen the state's capacity to identify opportunities, address challenges, and foster cross-sector collaboration in the blue economy.

Since October of 2025, HTDC has held multiple gathering of ecosystem partners in the blue economy, including organizations listed in the proposed task force. We have begun to build momentum towards shared strategies and goals, and having the Office of Marine Affairs under HTDC will allow us to continue the work and develop near-term strategic projects to accelerate growth in the blue economy.

To maximize the effectiveness of this initiative, HTDC respectfully recommends that the Legislature ensure sufficient resources(\$300,000) and flexibility for the Office of Marine Affairs to engage with industry stakeholders, leverage external expertise, and pursue federal and private funding opportunities. HTDC strongly supports HB1615. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.





PO Box 1095  
Kurtistown, Hawaii  
808-938-2840  
Jim.wyban@gmail.com

February 27 2026

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

RE: HB1615 Relating to Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation & SB2907 Relating to Marine Affairs

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Jim Wyban. I am an aquaculture scientist and entrepreneur and a pioneer of Hawai'i's Specific Pathogen Free (SPF) shrimp broodstock industry. Over the past three decades, my work based at NELHA has helped position Hawai'i as a global leader in biosecure shrimp genetics and high-value aquaculture exports.

Over the past eight months, in support of the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), I've been a part of a public-private network with 80+ organizations dedicated to supporting a sustainable blue economy and ocean innovation. I have seen firsthand through my 18 years as a tenant at NELHA plus 4 years as a Board member of NELHA the impact of marine aquaculture on the local economy. NELHA is a vibrant Ocean Cluster and the close association of the farms and projects there help everyone. If we could grow Hawaii's Ocean activities into a larger cluster there would be many benefits.

Bills **HB1615** & **SB2907** establish a much-needed coordinated approach that recognizes the blue economy or "ocean-based economy" as a state priority and supports the creation of future-ready jobs and opportunities for the state. Currently, Hawai'i is the only U.S. state touching the Pacific Ocean without an ocean cluster, essentially a blue economy hub - this is a significant disadvantage for our state's competitiveness.

Mahalo for dedicating your time and services to our State. I hope you will consider supporting this legislation to enhance our economy and ensure that Hawai'i remains competitive with other coastal states.

Sincerely,

Jim Wyban PhD  
Marine Genetics LLC



## Small Kine Farm

PO Box 600, Kailua, HI 96734

808-262-2724

smallkinefarm@gmail.com

www.smallkinefarm.com

Statement of  
**Fung Yang President Small Kine Farm**  
before the  
**ECD**

Monday, Mar 2nd, 2026

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**HB1615**  
**RELATING TO HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee.

Small Kine Farm **supports** HB1615 that appropriates monies to HTDC for positions in support of the State being an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes only. Establishes and appropriates funds for the Marine Affairs Coordinator position.

HTDC core programs develop infrastructure, capital, and talent to facilitate the development of technology and manufacturing jobs in Hawai'i. Following their mission, HTDC programs aim to provide technical and financial support for innovative small businesses from the startup stage through growth and export.

My company is the only USDA Certified organic mushroom farm in the State. HTDC has helped us to start and stay competitive from the very beginning. I am hoping to see more small businesses who can benefit from their help with more staff and more funding. They are playing an important role in our economy. I am currently employing 5 full time and 1 part time workers at the farm. Last year revenue was \$350,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



# AI.FISH

**TO:** Representative Todd, Chair, Committee on Economic Development  
Representative Takenouchi, Vice Chair, Committee on Economic Development  
**FROM:** Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish  
**RE: H.B. 1615** – Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation  
**HEARING DATE:** March 2, 2026

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I am Jimmy Freese, CEO of Ai.Fish, a Hawai'i based ocean technology company that uses AI-powered computer vision and electronic monitoring systems to support sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation. I am here in strong support of HB1615, relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation.

HB1615 is important because it funds consulting and coordination support for ocean technology and innovation development, helping HTDC and partners organize and grow Hawai'i's emerging blue economy cluster. This kind of support is critical infrastructure for small and scaling companies like Ai.Fish that are building tools to improve fisheries data, compliance, and ecosystem health in Hawai'i's waters and across the Pacific

With structured consulting and coordination capacity, HTDC and its partners will be better able to: connect companies like Ai.Fish with agencies, researchers, and fishers; design and manage pilot projects; and position Hawai'i to compete for federal, philanthropic, and private investment in ocean innovation. In our experience, the biggest barrier is not ideas or technology, but the time and capacity required to convene the right public/private teams that expedite movement from pilots to operational deployments. HB1615 directly addresses this need and will accelerate job creation, investment, and exportable solutions rooted in Hawai'i.

Over seven years, HTDC has been a critical partner for Ai.Fish—from funding and commercialization support to helping us compete for federal funding. Having dedicated ocean technology coordination capacity, as this bill provides, is exactly what companies like ours need to scale. It also helps ensure that Hawai'i's ocean technology companies can stay headquartered here, hiring locally and contributing to a coordinated statewide strategy for the blue economy.

In summary, Ai.Fish strongly supports HB1615 because it provides the consulting and coordination backbone needed for Hawai'i to fully realize its blue economy potential and to support homegrown innovators delivering globally relevant, sustainability focused solutions. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Freese

CEO and Co-Founder

Ai.Fish

Statement of  
Gregory Wong  
Co-Founder and Engineer at WaiHome LLC  
before the  
**House Committee on Finance**

Monday, March 2nd, 2026  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**HB1615**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee

WaiHome LLC stands in **strong support** of HB1615, HD1, which declares Hawaii an "ocean cluster" and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC. As a Hawaii-based startup funded by the NSF, NOAA, and HTDC, we believe this measure is essential for the following reasons:

- *Accelerating Commercialization for Local Startups:* While federal grants (NSF/NOAA) fund our R&D, this state program provides the roadmap to turn our excavation-free wastewater systems into a deployable, market-ready utility for Hawaii's 83,000 cesspool owners.
- *Retaining Hawaii's Innovation Talent:* By identifying and solving regulatory hurdles for "technology-enabled ocean industries," this bill ensures that WaiHome can continue to manufacture our systems locally and hire from the Hawaii workforce. Without this coordination, local startups are often forced to move to the mainland to scale.
- *Direct Impact on Coastal Resilience:* This bill recognizes local knowledge and modern technology as a dual-engine for growth. **At WaiHome, we use this regenerative approach to protect solve our cesspool crisis. We are proof that a Blue Economy can start right here with solutions designed in Hawaii for Hawaii.**

I urge the committee to pass HB1615, HD1 to invest in Hawaii's self-reliance and global leadership in ocean innovation.

Mahalo,  
Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,



Gregory Wong  
Co-founder and Engineer  
WaiHome LLC



**Blue Startups**  
55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700  
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the FIN Committee on  
Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Regarding **HB1615 HD1**:  
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

## **Testimony in Support**

Date: February 28, 2026

From: Chenoa Farnsworth  
Managing Director, Blue Startups  
chenoa@bluestartups.com

**Committee on Finance:**  
Chair Rep. Chris Todd,  
Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi,  
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chenoa Farnsworth, and I am the Managing Director at Blue Startups. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1615**.

Blue Startups was founded to help **diversify Hawai‘i’s economy** by building a stronger technology sector. For more than a decade, we have supported entrepreneurs building companies in Hawai‘i.

Blue Startups is launching an **Ocean Tech Program** this summer designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

Hawai‘i’s ocean and coastal strengths have the power to touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism.

We strongly support the Committee in passing **HB1615** and advancing it through the remaining referrals.

A **Marine Affairs Coordinator** can help align strategy with execution. This includes identifying barriers, building partnerships, and pursuing public and federal resources that local companies

and researchers can use to test, deploy, and scale solutions in Hawai'i. The bill's focus on investment readiness and commercialization pathways is especially important for turning ideas into **jobs** and deployable projects.

**HB1615** supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens **economic diversification**. It improves **resilience** through coastal and ocean-related innovation. It expands pathways to **higher wage jobs** in technology-enabled ocean sectors. It helps attract and retain **talent and investment** by presenting a clear statewide strategy and a coordinated entry point for engagement across all islands.

**HB1615** is a practical step toward stronger coordination and stronger results for Hawai'i's **blue economy**. We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB1615** with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

**Chenoa Farnsworth**  
Managing Director  
Blue Startups





**Hawai'i Angels**  
335 Merchant Street, Suite #516  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Statement of **Alexi Drouin**  
Assistant Director, Hawai'i Angels

before the

**Committee on Finance**

**Regarding HB1615 HD1:**  
"Relating to the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation"

## **Testimony in Support**

**Date:** February 28, 2026

**To:**

**Committee on Finance:**

Chair Rep. Chris Todd,  
Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi,  
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexi Drouin, and I am the Assistant Director of Hawai'i Angels, Program Operations at Blue Startups, and Ambassador for Hawai'i Tech Week. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB1615**.

Hawai'i Angels is a statewide startup investing group. We support founders with early capital, and we convene entrepreneurs and investors through a regular pitch forum. Our work depends on a strong pipeline of local companies and the partners that help them grow in Hawai'i.

**HB1615** strengthens Hawai'i's ability to compete in the **blue economy** by directing the **Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)** to establish the **Office of Marine Affairs and a Coordinator** within HTDC to develop, coordinate, and implement **ocean technology and innovation initiatives**. This includes building a statewide strategy, coordinating cross-agency work, identifying gaps and opportunities, pursuing funding, supporting workforce development, and reporting progress.

This approach supports outcomes that matter statewide. It grows **high-skill jobs**. It accelerates **economic diversification**. It strengthens **resilience** through ocean observation and coastal solutions. It improves Hawai'i's ability to **attract and retain talent** and **investment**. It also increases **statewide participation** across all islands.

For Hawai'i Angels, clearer statewide coordination and strategy in ocean innovation helps more founders understand where the opportunities are and how to connect to **public and private partners**. It also helps outside investors see Hawai'i has an organized **pipeline** and credible **infrastructure** for ocean technology development.

For these reasons, Hawai'i Angels respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB1615** with a recommendation of **support** and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

**Alexi Drouin**  
Assistant Director  
Hawai'i Angels



Statement of  
**Anthony Mau PhD**  
**Founder, CEO**  
**Kupu Place Aquaponics LLC**  
before the  
**Committee on Finance**

**Sunday, March 2, 2026**  
**8:00 Am**

In consideration of  
**<HB1615>**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Chair Christ Todd and Vice Chair **Jenna Takenouchi** and Members of the Committee on **Finance**.

**Kupu Place** strongly **SUPPORTS <Bill Number HB1615>**, which will formally recognize the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establish the Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force under the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and provide essential funding for capacity building to advance Hawai'i's ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. This bill is a pivotal investment in Hawai'i's economic future—strengthening our leadership in the blue economy, expanding economic opportunities across the Pacific, and positioning our islands as a global model for regenerative and sustainable ocean innovation.

Hawai'i's blue economy contributes over \$10 billion to our GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the U.S. largest island state in the Pacific and ocean steward in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is not only uniquely positioned to innovate but to attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments to sustain the local blue economy and address critical marine issues across the Pacific. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. Pacific state touching the Pacific Ocean without a designated ocean cluster. This measure would help recognize the sustainable blue economy and the important initiatives to build economic resiliency for the state.

Advancing ocean technology and innovation directly aligns with HTDC's mission and leverages our natural strengths, positioning Hawai'i as a strategic innovation hub in the Pacific. This bill will create future-ready jobs and unlock additional federal, philanthropic, and private funding to not only sustain our economy but address critical marine challenges.

Kupu Place is the largest producer of specialty produce (microgreens) in the State, focused on reducing importation and increasing access to healthy food. We employ 12 farmers in roughly 1.5 acres of production. However, prior to moving forward as an agricultural company, our dream was to produce sustainable seafood for Hawaii using technology like aquaponics and regenerative aquaculture. This bill directly impacts companies like ours, focused on developing the next generation of farmers to implement innovative food systems and strategies to feed our community without compromising the environment. This bill supports entities focused on blue foods, and would help to bring in federal funding to support infrastructure development, establish funding mechanisms for startups, create a business ecosystem with support services for our business, and really focus on industries that leverage Hawaii's unique resources for its people. We still have a vision to produce blue foods, and we envision the work that HTDC is leading to bring in necessary resources that will connect land and sea.

In summary, **Bill 1615** is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean technology and innovation while realizing the vision of a resilient economic future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Sincerely,

**Anthony Mau Ph.D.**

**Founder, Kupu Place Aquaponics LLC**



**HB-1615-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 8:23:17 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sam A Young	Voltage Vessels	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**TESTIMONY OF SAM YOUNG**

Founder, Voltage Vessels LLC

Before the House Committee on Finance

March 2, 2026

In Support of HB1615 / SB2907 – Hawai‘i Ocean Cluster and Office of Marine Affairs

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of the proposed legislation establishing Hawai‘i as an Ocean Cluster and creating an Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation.

Hawai‘i’s geographic position, Exclusive Economic Zone, research institutions, and maritime heritage uniquely position our state to lead in ocean technology, marine innovation, and advanced manufacturing. However, coordination, implementation, and long term strategy have historically been fragmented. Formal designation and structured leadership will allow Hawai‘i to align public, private, and academic efforts toward measurable economic outcomes.

As a local advanced manufacturing company focused on recyclable composite materials and additive manufacturing for maritime and uncrewed systems, I see firsthand the opportunity to anchor more ocean technology production and sustainment capacity here in Hawai‘i rather than exporting both jobs and intellectual property to the mainland.

This legislation is important for three key reasons:

First, it creates an accountable coordination mechanism under HTDC that can actively pursue and align federal funding streams across defense, resilience, environmental monitoring, and maritime innovation.

Second, it recognizes that ocean technology is not solely research driven. It requires local manufacturing, prototyping, testing, and workforce development to translate innovation into sustained economic activity.

Third, it positions Hawai‘i to compete with established ocean clusters such as San Diego by formalizing collaboration and creating a clear entry point for private sector participation.

As implementation moves forward, I respectfully encourage the Committee to ensure that advanced manufacturing, additive manufacturing, and materials innovation are explicitly included within the scope of the Office of Marine Affairs and any associated strategic planning efforts. Hawai'i has the opportunity not only to design ocean solutions, but to build and sustain them locally.

This bill represents a practical step toward diversifying Hawai'i's economy, creating future ready jobs, and strengthening maritime resilience.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sam Young  
Founder  
Voltage Vessels LLC  
Ha'ikū, Hawai'i



DATE: 3/1/2026

TO: Rep. Chris Todd  
Chair on Committee on Finance

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi  
Vice Chair on Committee on Finance

FROM: Hohonu

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to Marine Affairs**  
**HEARING DATE: 2/2/2026 2pm**

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the Committee on Finance

Hohonu **strongly supports** House Bill 1615 as a catalyst for growing the ecosystem of companies around the state working in the blue economy. Hohonu was founded in 2019 in Hawai'i by Dr. Brian Glazer, a professor at UH Manoa, to address persistent gaps in flood monitoring. Today, Hohonu operates flood monitoring networks across 18 states, including Hawai'i, serving federal partners, state agencies, counties, municipalities, institutions of higher education, and the private consulting sector. Hohonu is headquartered in Honolulu where it designs, develops and manufactures its water level sensors.

Leadership from the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, and the use of an expert focused on planning and executing a blue economy strategy, will have the positive effect of coordinating the local blue economy ecosystem and aligning stakeholders in both the private and public sector. Companies, especially hardware companies like Hohonu, thrive when there is a strong, connected ecosystem of companies growing the local skill base and supply chain. There are compounding benefits to having related companies in a single area: similar job opportunities allow local talent to develop related skills early on, knowledge spillover accelerates innovation, local suppliers and service providers can specialize and grow to meet increased demand and a cluster attracts more investment and more outside interest from buyers.

Hohonu is in a strong position to grow and thrive, but as we grow we will be constrained by the local availability of specialized talent, availability of suppliers capable of scaling with us and logistics challenges related to both fulfillment of orders and imports of necessary components. These challenges are neither unique to Hohonu nor new. The Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation is well positioned to address these problems across a blue economy cluster and we have a better chance at solving them by bringing in expertise and focus.

Hawai'i is a unique and challenging location to start a technology company and it requires a focused, highly collaborative effort to be successful. We believe House Bill 1615 will enable that collaboration and success and **we strongly support its passage**

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Noah Pentelovitch  
Head of Hardware  
Hohonu

**HB-1615-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 8:27:03 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alana Marsili	Privateer Space Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

# TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1615

## Relating to Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)

House Committee on Finance

March 1, 2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alana Marsili, and I submit this testimony in strong support of HB1615, which recognizes and advances Hawai‘i’s ocean cluster and expands HTDC’s efforts in developing the blue economy and ocean technology innovation ecosystem.

Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in ocean intelligence, maritime domain awareness, and blue-economy innovation. As the geographic center of the Pacific and home to INDOPACOM, Coast Guard District 14, world-class research institutions, and a growing ocean-tech startup ecosystem, Hawai‘i already operates at the intersection of environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and national security.

HB1615 appropriately recognizes what is already emerging: Hawai‘i is not simply participating in the blue economy — it is becoming a defining node in it.

The formal recognition of Hawai‘i’s ocean cluster and the expansion of HTDC’s role will:

- Strengthen Hawai‘i’s position as the Pacific’s premier ocean innovation hub
- Attract dual-use technology companies focused on maritime awareness, climate resilience, fisheries protection, and port security
- Catalyze public-private partnerships across defense, environmental, and commercial maritime sectors
- Create high-wage, future-oriented jobs that retain local talent
- Leverage federal investment aligned with Indo-Pacific priorities

The global maritime environment is increasingly complex. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; gray-zone maritime activity; climate-driven ocean change; and critical infrastructure

vulnerabilities all converge in the Pacific. Hawai‘i has both the lived experience and the institutional infrastructure to lead responsibly in addressing these challenges.

HTDC’s expanded mandate will allow the State to coordinate capital, research, commercialization pathways, and federal alignment in a coherent manner. This is not simply an economic development measure — it is strategic positioning for the next decade of Pacific innovation.

Importantly, Hawai‘i’s blue-economy leadership must be values-driven: sustainable, inclusive, environmentally responsible, and aligned with the stewardship traditions of the islands. HB1615 enables that framework.

By strengthening HTDC’s role in cultivating ocean technology and innovation, the State ensures that Hawai‘i remains not just a strategic outpost, but a center of gravity for Pacific solutions.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1615.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration.

Alana Marsili



## Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700  
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the FIN Committee on  
Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Regarding **HB1615 HD1**:  
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

## Testimony in Support

Date: March 1, 2026

From: David Holt  
Program Director, Blue Startups  
david@bluestartups.com

### **Committee on Finance:**

Chair Rep. Chris Todd,  
Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi,  
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Holt, and I am the Program Director at Blue Startups. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1615**.

Blue Startups was founded to help **diversify Hawai‘i’s economy** by building a stronger technology sector. For more than a decade, we have supported entrepreneurs building companies in Hawai‘i.

Blue Startups is launching an **Ocean Tech Program** this summer designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

Hawai‘i’s ocean and coastal strengths have the power to touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism.

We strongly support the Committee in passing **HB1615** and advancing it through the remaining referrals.

A **Marine Affairs Coordinator** can help align strategy with execution. This includes identifying barriers, building partnerships, and pursuing public and federal resources that local companies

and researchers can use to test, deploy, and scale solutions in Hawai'i. The bill's focus on investment readiness and commercialization pathways is especially important for turning ideas into **jobs** and deployable projects.

**HB1615** supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens **economic diversification**. It improves **resilience** through coastal and ocean-related innovation. It expands pathways to **higher wage jobs** in technology-enabled ocean sectors. It helps attract and retain **talent and investment** by presenting a clear statewide strategy and a coordinated entry point for engagement across all islands.

**HB1615** is a practical step toward stronger coordination and stronger results for Hawai'i's **blue economy**. We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB1615** with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

**David Holt**  
Program Director  
Blue Startups





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Statement of  
Valerie Harmon  
Founder and CEO  
Namaka Algae, Inc.  
before the  
**House Committee on Finance**

Monday, March 2, 2026  
2 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**HB 1615**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAII' I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance.

Namaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Namaka Algae, Inc. is a technology first company focused on low-cost algae biomass for fish superfoods. We produce in Hawaii for Hawaii markets and plan to expand to the US mainland and globally for larger market access and profitability. Aquaculture has the potential to provide efficient, low carbon footprint protein to feed our growing populations, and at Namaka we aim to support the growth of this industry by providing quality, reliable and nutritious feed ingredients made from microalgae. We support HTDCs programs which benefit our company greatly. The focus on Marine and Ocean tech and industries is vital to continue the growth and expansion of our industries to support job growth, and ultimately improved food security for our Islands.



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In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Nicholas Ulm. I am the CEO and Founder of Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS). My company produces Hālonā WEC, which is a wave energy buoy that aims to reduce the cost of powering our local blue economy activities. The buoy produces power on the same principles that makes the Halona blowhole spout and was developed as a part of my PhD at the University of Hawaii.

I have dedicated the last decade and the entirety of my adult life to addressing our state's food and energy security needs. I was born and raised here on Oahu; I would like to see more people like me continue to be able to make it here. My story is like that of so many of our kama'aina. I spent as much time in the ocean as I did in the classroom. I went to college in the continental US, received a degree in engineering, and unlike many of the friends I grew up with, I was privileged enough to be able to come back to the islands.

I returned to Hawaii and the UH Ocean & Resource Engineering PhD program because it is one of the best in the nation. This program is strengthened by a local blue economy, with companies that readily hire local graduates and strong innovation and workforce development programs, such as Purple Mai'a and KUPU. I want to emphasize that this blue economy structure supports an exceptionally high hire rate for graduates within one month of graduation. These positions are good-paying, local jobs that offer deep fulfillment, particularly for those of us who were raised here.

Although UH was able to help me to form the technological foundations, it was limited in how much they could support the commercialization. I was privileged to be supported by UH HITIDE and Hatch Blue through the Ocean Foundry Incubator program, both supported in part through the state. This was my first interaction with state supported business development and it was transformative to my company. But right when we started to see growth, it sunsetted and the federal administration changed. Everyone knew this was coming, but there was a lack of overarching coordination at a higher state level to make sure that this lapse didn't come for companies like mine.

So HOPS had to look elsewhere for support. Both programs directed us towards the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerator. This is a federally funded program that was set up during the previous administration to bring blue economy technologies to full commercial readiness. The federal government administered this funding to ocean cluster organizations. As is made clear by this bill, Hawaii does not currently have that designation. We currently do not have the coordination at the state level to receive those funds to support our ocean-based economy.

So I again had to look to the continental US for support. I was privileged to be accepted into a program in Los Angeles called Braid Theory, which is located at Altasea. Their program networked us with all the other ocean clusters across the country and what I saw simultaneously

made me excited and disappointed. These clusters were only a few years old, but in the time since their founding, the companies that sprung up around them had rapidly grown from the coordination and connectivity the clusters provided. Why wasn't this something that was present in the community that I had come from?

The coordination at the state or municipal level brought together community organizations who had issues with technologists who had solutions to meet both needs. I saw these cluster organizers connecting harbor masters who had issues with pollution management with community organizers concerned on the pollution impacts and technology companies with solutions to pollution mitigation. The cluster worked to orchestrate collaboration to address the issue. It centered the process on shared values and provided avenues for trust, while helping the economy to grow. It was not exploitative or extractive, it was collaboratively competitive. It produced the excellence that we strive for here locally.

This can happen here in Hawaii. We managed to get started a federally supported pilot program here in Hawaii for blue economy technologies, that starts this summer. HTDC brought in the community and stakeholders to set the values. Hawaii companies pushed the feds to set up the program with these values in mind, and actually convinced them to buy in. One of these pilots is a training program for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders to become remotely controlled underwater vehicle pilots. This program will not require a college degree, is 4 weeks long, and can be used for verification of the efficacy of conservation projects under the Green Fee.

We have the grassroots foundations for a strong blue economy, it's time for the state to start better coordinating support for the local blue economy. HTDC has done great work this past year to coordinate with the local blue economy, but it still feels like efforts are happening in silo.

We need to enable them with better organizational coordination to pursue these federal opportunities. I implore you to designate Hawaii as an ocean cluster to create structures that will support kama'aina like me, who just want to keep generations of ocean loving people in Hawaii.

Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS) respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of **HB1615**.



Veronica Rocha  
CEO  
Essential Leap, LLC  
P.O. Box 26451  
Honolulu, HI 96825

RE: Testimony in **Support of HB1615, HD1**

Date: Monday, March 2, 2026  
Time: 2:00 pm  
Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Rep. Chris Todd and Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi,

Essential Leap is a Honolulu based consultancy that helps to accelerate cleantech adoption through results-driven, end-to-end market development.

I am writing in support of House Bill 1615, HD1, which declares the State as an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes only; establishes and appropriates funds for the Marine Affairs Coordinator position; requires the Marine Affairs Coordinator to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature; transfers the functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs; appropriates funds for the Office of Marine Affairs to procure the services of a consultant to support the marine affairs declaration of intent.

I support this bill because it addresses critical opportunities for Hawaii's economic and sustainable future. Our geographic location and cultural heritage connect us deeply to the Pacific Ocean — yet fully realizing our potential in ocean-related technology and industry requires strategic planning and coordination that go beyond current capacity. By declaring the State as an ocean cluster and engaging a consultant with technical expertise, the State can develop a clear blue economy strategy with actionable steps, attract new investment, enhance workforce development, facilitate commercialization of innovative technologies, and strengthen public-private partnerships. This will benefit Hawaii by creating high-quality jobs, diversifying our economy, and advancing sustainability in sectors ranging from marine robotics to coastal resiliency, while honoring Native Hawaiian stewardship of marine resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1615, HD1. Your consideration of this measure demonstrates a commitment to long-term economic innovation, sustainability, and strategic investment in Hawaii's future. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill so that Hawaii can build a strong, forward-looking blue economy that benefits all residents and protects our precious ocean resources for generations to come.

Thank you,

*Veronica Rocha*

Veronica Rocha

Statement of  
Jesse Rodriguez  
Founder  
NeuroMuse LLC  
before the  
House Committee on Finance

Monday, March 2, 2026

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of

HB1615 HD1

RELATING TO HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance.

NeuroMuse LLC strongly SUPPORTS HB1615 HD1, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

NeuroMuse LLC is a Hawai'i-based technology company developing advanced augmented reality (AR) smartglass platforms and workforce innovation tools through the ELARA™

system and MuseOS™ platform. Our work focuses on workforce training, emergency response, logistics, healthcare support, and STEM education applications that align directly with Hawai'i's innovation and economic diversification goals.

HTDC programs and SBIR matching support are critical for small technology companies like ours to compete for federal research funding. These programs enable local startups to remain in Hawai'i while building high-technology solutions, creating skilled workforce opportunities, and collaborating with local educational institutions such as Kapi'olani Community College and University of Hawai'i partners.

Through participation in SBIR pathways and workforce development initiatives, NeuroMuse LLC is actively engaging Hawai'i students in applied engineering, prototyping, and advanced manufacturing experiences leading up to public demonstrations and workforce training events. Support for HB1615 HD1 strengthens Hawai'i's innovation ecosystem by helping local companies transition research into real-world products, attract federal investment, and create future-ready jobs within the state.

For these reasons, NeuroMuse LLC strongly supports HB1615 HD1 and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this measure.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Dear Chairman Todd, Vice-chairwoman Takenouchi, and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Joshua Baghdady and my career is a testament to the power of the blue economy to connect people, ideas, and activities for the health and sustainability of our blue planet. I wish to testify in strong support of House Bill 1615 (HD1) to establish Hawai'i as an ocean cluster.

I was homeschooled in the coastal state of South Carolina and studied electrical engineering at Clemson University. In graduate school, I was fortunate enough to work on a project funded by the Office of Naval Research investigating the use of semiconductor lasers for underwater wireless communications. While presenting my work at a marine technology conference in California, I met a physical oceanographer and marine ecologist from the US Coast Guard who became my mentor in all things relating to the ocean. I was intrigued by this linkage of technology and marine stewardship and decided to pivot my career in this direction. My mentor introduced me to Margo Edwards, the director of the Applied Research Laboratory at UH, and I began my professional career here in Hawai'i in 2017. Over the past decade I have been involved on a myriad of marine-related projects, from ocean sensing with robots, buoys, and undersea cables to supporting ecology studies of Hawaiian green sea turtle resting habits in Pearl Harbor. I have also been involved at the national and international levels as an ocean advocate, co-founding both the Marine Technology Society Early Career Ocean Professionals program and the UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals Network Programme. I was in the room at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France in June 2025 when around 30 countries adopted the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction to establish international protections for the High Seas. This experience and exposure have convinced me that the blue economy is society's pathway to sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and I look forward to working with the state to catalyze a new era of economic prosperity for Hawai'i that is anchored in the largest and most precious natural resource our species has the privilege to steward: our oceans. Thank you very much.

Statement of  
**Doreen Wong**  
**Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor**  
before the  
**Committee on Finance**

**Monday, March 2, 2026**  
**2:00 PM**  
**State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

In consideration of  
**HB1615**  
**RELATING TO HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I, Doreen Wong, a sustainable blue economy and ocean technology and innovation professional, strongly urge you to **SUPPORT HB1615 HD1**, which will formally recognize the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establish the Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force within Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and provide resources to catalyze local capacity building to advance Hawai'i's ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. This bill is an investment into long-term Hawai'i's economic resiliency and future.

I bring 14 years of experience working at the intersection of technology innovation, policy, and finance across global, regional, and local levels. I currently advise NOAA-funded Ocean Enterprise Accelerators, including UC San Diego's StartBlue and VentureWell, and have collaborated with HTDC and the University of Hawai'i to develop our local ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. As a Contributing Member of the 1000 Ocean Startups coalition, a global network of over 60 incubators, accelerators, venture capital firms, and other capital providers (several with ties to Hawai'i), I have seen firsthand the rapid growth of this sector over the years and the funding opportunities that Hawai'i has, at times, missed out on.

The blue economy is one of the fastest growing sectors, encompassing maritime, logistics and supply chain, coastal resiliency, marine conservation, energy, blue foods or aquatic foods, biotechnology, ocean data, and outdoor recreation. [Hawai'i's blue economy](#) is already contributing over \$10 billion to our state's GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the largest U.S. island state in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to support the Pacific Islands in attracting federal, philanthropic, and private investments to this region.

However, to maintain our competitive edge and realize our full potential, we need a coordinated, systems-level approach. HB1615 HD1 provides this by:

- **Recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster:** This formal designation will help attract different types of funding and support, foster innovation, and create quality jobs that leverage our natural strengths.
- **Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs and Task Force:** These bodies will coordinate statewide efforts to support economic development and leverage technology and innovation to address critical marine issues.
- **Funding key positions and capacity building:** This bill supports the hiring of a coordinator and providing additional timely resources for capacity building to advance efforts.

Other U.S. coastal states and global regions, such as San Diego, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, New England, Florida, Norway, Iceland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and more, have successfully leveraged ocean clusters to drive local economic growth, innovation, and workforce development. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. Pacific state touching the Pacific Ocean without a designated ocean cluster, risking missed opportunities for leadership and funding.

The moment for Hawai'i is **now**. Over the past eight months, HTDC has been developing this momentum, engaging more than 80 organizations interested in furthering the state's economic future. In UHERO's most recent economic report, [\*Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?\*](#), notes:

*“Addressing the cost of living remains essential, but without meaningful improvements in productivity and real income growth, the same economic pressures driving outmigration today will persist and intensify over time. With thoughtful, locally-driven policy and a renewed commitment to long-term value creation, Hawai'i can move from being ‘left behind’ toward building a more dynamic and resilient future.”*

By passing HB1615 HD1, Hawai'i can lean into its natural strengths and serve as a global model for the Pacific Islands in sustainable and regenerative ocean innovation. HB1615 HD1 is a timely and necessary measure to recognize Hawaii's leadership in the blue economy and realize its full potential as a leader in marine industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1615 HD1.

Sincerely,



Doreen Wong  
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor  
Contributing Member, 1000 Ocean Startups

**HB-1615-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 10:48:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
George Yarbrough	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**DATE:** March 1, 2026

**TO:** **Representative Chris Todd**, Chair, Finance

**Representative Jenna Takenouchi**, Vice Chair, Finance

**FROM:** George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

**RE: H.B. 1615, H.D. 1 – Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation HEARING DATE: TBD**

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee:

I submit this testimony in **support of House Bill 1615, H.D. 1**, which establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), creates the Marine Affairs Coordinator position, and appropriates funds for advising & consultant services to support the implementation of Hawai‘i’s ocean cluster declaration of intent.

I am an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Over the past several years, I have worked alongside HTDC to support the development of Hawai‘i’s ocean technology ecosystem—convening stakeholders, attracting investment, and helping to build the organizational infrastructure for a statewide blue economy strategy. I was raised in Hawai‘I who returned home to start a family, and the question of how we build a more resilient, innovation-driven economy here is one I take personally.

**HTDC Has Developed Momentum Through Eight Months of Demonstrated Results**

Placing the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC is a recognition of where the real work has already been happening. Over the past eight months, HTDC has done what no other state agency has accomplished: it has convened leaders across Hawai‘i’s blue economy—from ocean tech startups and research institutions to federal partners and Native Hawaiian organizations—and begun aligning them around a shared statewide strategy. Fragmenting this work across agencies or starting fresh elsewhere would reset that progress. This bill ensures the work stays where it has been built—and that it continues there.

### **Advising and Subject Matter Expert Support Sets the Office Up for Success**

The early months of a new office are foundational—they determine whether the right national and international partnerships are formed and whether the office enters the field with credibility or plays catch-up for years. Consultants bring specialized knowledge, speed, and bandwidth that allow an agency to accelerate strategy development while permanent staff and resources are put in place. They help translate planning into actionable roadmaps and connect Hawai‘i to proven ocean cluster models in San Diego, Norway, Iceland, and Singapore—rather than rebuilding those networks from scratch.

### **The Expertise We Need Is Already Here**

Hawai‘i already has consultants and subject matter experts who have been doing this work on the ground. These are not outside voices—they are local professionals who understand Hawai‘i’s cultural context, and economic realities, and who have been building the relationships and strategic groundwork the Office will need from day one. Investing in locally based experts keeps knowledge and value in-state and ensures the Office’s early direction reflects genuine community expertise.

### **This Investment Allows Hawai‘i to Compete for Transformative Federal Funding**

As an example the federal Ocean Regional Opportunity and Innovation Act (S.1392/H.R.3048) would designate at least seven Ocean Innovation Clusters nationwide and fund their development—multi-million dollar opportunities. To compete, Hawai‘i must demonstrate a formally designated, operationally credible ocean cluster with cross-sector partnerships and a clear strategic roadmap. Without a permanent home at HTDC, a coordinator, and consultant support to accelerate early implementation, we risk being passed over for opportunities other coastal states are already pursuing. The designation alone is not enough—the infrastructure to act on it is what this bill provides.

I urge the committee to pass H.B. 1615, H.D. 1. The Office of Marine Affairs, housed at HTDC and supported by the right mix of permanent staff and expert consultants, is the institutional foundation Hawai'i's blue economy needs. The momentum is real.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

**George Yarbrough**

IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow | [gyarbrough@economicrecoverycorps.org](mailto:gyarbrough@economicrecoverycorps.org)

**HB-1615-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 12:20:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lindsey Wilbur	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lindsey Wilbur, and I am testifying in support of HB1615.

HB1615 strengthens coordination of Hawai‘i’s ocean and marine innovation activities by establishing dedicated capacity within the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation. Hawai‘i already has researchers, entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, and community groups working in ocean-related fields. HTDC could help us connect and grow.

As a student at Windward Community College pursuing an algae culture certificate, I see firsthand how marine research, workforce development, and small business innovation are connected. A coordinated framework within HTDC helps ensure that these efforts are not siloed, and that Hawai‘i can compete effectively for federal and private funding in aquaculture, marine biotechnology, and coastal resilience.

This bill does not create unnecessary bureaucracy. It strengthens accountability through reporting and creates a practical structure to leverage existing assets more effectively.

Ocean innovation in Hawai‘i must be sustainable and grounded in kuleana. HB1615 is a measured step toward responsible growth in the blue economy.

I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Statement of  
Kelsey Kim  
Embedded Software Engineer  
Havoc AI  
before the  
Committee on Finance

Monday, March 2, 2026  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol

In consideration of  
HB1615

RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Todd and Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I submit this testimony on behalf of Havoc AI in support of House bill1615. Havoc AI is a maritime technology company focused on creating various classes of autonomous surface vessels (ASV).

In 2025, Havoc AI began development in Hawaii, conducting testing for newly developed ASVs and conducting on-water demonstrations for potential customers and partners. These Hawaii demonstrations are crucial to establishing relationships with international customers and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Successful demonstrations in 2025 have led to opportunities allowing Havoc AI to expand operations in Hawaii, providing job opportunities for local engineers, operations and logistics specialists, and business professionals. Continued support from HTDC and the State of Hawaii could allow Havoc AI to grow manufacturing, development, and testing operations, stimulate Hawaii's economy through ocean technology, and most importantly, continue creating high-paying and engaging job opportunities for engineers in Hawaii.

Thank you so much for your consideration and support of ocean technology in Hawaii!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Kim

Embedded Software Engineer, Havoc AI

DATE: 2026-JAN-28

TO: Representatives Greggor Ilagan, Ikaika Hussey, Mark Hashem, Dee Morikawa, Chris Todd, and Jenna Takenouchi

FROM: Brennan Yamamoto

RE: HB1829, RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS *and* HB1615, RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Aloha Representatives Greggor Ilagan, Ikaika Hussey, Mark Hashem, Dee Morikawa, Chris Todd, and Jenna Takenouchi, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the House Committees on Economic Development & Technology, Water & Land, and Finance, and others to whom this testimony concerns. My name is Brennan Yamamoto and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of House bills HB1829 and HB1615.

I was born and raised on Oahu, graduating from Moanalua High school in 2009, and subsequently earning my mechanical engineering BS (2013), MS (2015), and PhD (2019) degrees from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I then worked for the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i from 2020 to 2025 as a Robotics Engineer, developing multiple maritime systems and technologies in service of Hawai'i's local community and the United States Department of Defense. I am currently the Robotics Engineering Lead for HavocAI, the industry leader for collaborative autonomous systems in the maritime domain, where we partner closely with PacMar Technologies, a local multi-generational naval architecture and maritime technology company, to operate fleets of cutting-edge autonomous surface vehicles in waters just south of Honolulu.

Hawai'i is surrounded by a diverse and easily accessible ocean environment, making it an ideal location to develop ocean-related technologies from multiple sectors, including, but not limited to: marine biology, renewable energy, environmental protection, aquaculture, naval architecture, and robotic/autonomous systems. Unfortunately, a lack of an effective, forward-thinking government agency specifically responsible for incubation of these emerging technologies has substantially limited growth in these sectors. I can reference one prominent example from personal experience.

While working with the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i in 2022, I was involved in research toward detecting sea disposed munitions in littoral (shallow) waters; this problem directly affects Hawai'i residents and many coastal communities around the world. This process involves evaluating the effectiveness of cutting-edge sensing and robotic technologies in real-world environments seeded with inert, surrogate munitions. Hawai'i's exceptional diversity of littoral zones, year-around access to the ocean, proximity to world class maritime biology resources at the University of Hawai'i, and *real* public benefit from the solutions discovered in this research, made Hawai'i an excellent candidate for evaluating these emerging technologies. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic structures associated with permitting use of new technologies in the ocean simply do not exist, which dramatically delayed project timelines, reducing eligibility for future federal funding, and negating the benefits our persistent access to the ocean provide. A government agency tasked with stewardship and advocacy of ocean technologies can act to *proactively* support essential efforts like this example.

I am a proud product of the State of Hawai'i, graduate of the UH system, and an advocate for diversifying opportunities for talented kama'āina to work in high technology at home in the islands. I believe that Hawai'i can and should be a pioneer in ocean technology, and that the efforts proposed in HB1829 and HB1615 are the first *baby steps* toward developing a thriving local ocean technology industry that will serve many future generations of engineers and scientists.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Brennan Yamamoto, PhD and Gizmologist