

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
465 S. KING STREET, #103
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

JON S. ITOMURA
CHAIR

NAOMI U. KUWAYE
COMMISSIONER

COLIN A. YOST
COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (808) 586-2020
Facsimile: (808) 586-2066

Website: puc.hawaii.gov
E-mail: puc@hawaii.gov

Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
House Committee on
Transportation

February 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

Measure: H.B. No. 2378
Title: RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") offers the following comments for consideration.

Comments:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure to exempt wing-in-ground craft from the Commission's jurisdiction.

The Commission notes that wing-in-ground craft will likely be regulated by the U.S. Coast Guard for the purpose of safety. Additionally, the Commission believes that the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") may have regulatory authority over certain wing-in-ground operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Transportation

Thursday, February 19, 2026
09:00 am
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 2378
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, Members of the Committees.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on **HB 2378**, which would exempt wing-in-ground (WIG) craft—commonly known as *Seaglidors*—from regulation under the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act (HRS 271G). This legislation is timely, necessary, and aligned with Hawai'i's climate, transportation, economic development, and resilience priorities.

This bill correctly highlights several statewide benefits of Seaglidors which include zero operational emissions, additional rapid interisland travel opportunities for healthcare, essential services, and employment. This is especially critical for neighbor island residents who rely on Oahu's medical facilities. Seaglidors also enhance resilience and emergency response operations by reaching communities isolated by disasters, support humanitarian missions, and strengthen food and medical supply continuity.

Workforce & Economic Development

The growth of a Seaglider industry in Hawai'i aligns with Hawai'i's and HTDC broader economic diversification goals of strengthening Hawai'i's innovation economy, creating high-skilled jobs, attracting sustainable infrastructure investment, and positioning the state as a global leader in clean maritime-aviation technologies

PUC Regulation Is Not Necessary and Would Slow Deployment

HRS 271G was devised to regulate traditional maritime shipping, ensuring continuity of service, preventing monopolistic practices, and overseeing tariffs and rates. It is not designed or intended for federally regulated craft like Seaglidors. Further no other state imposes PUC type regulations for water transportation this way. They rely upon:



- U.S. Coast Guard to provide consumer protection oversight for WIG craft.
- Federal maritime laws for vessel classification
- State boating laws for basic operational rules (navigation, speed limits, environmental rules)
- Seagliders are intended to complement air travel, not compete as water carriers as was the purpose of HRS 271G.

Applying HRS 271G would impose duplicative and costly regulation without improving safety, environmental, or consumer protection. Exempting WIG craft aligns Hawai'i's regulatory framework with federal jurisdiction and with how WIG and other aviation-adjacent technologies are treated nationwide. This legislation is not about favoring one company or technology—it is about removing structural barriers which prevent Hawai'i from adopting zero-emission transportation solutions.

HB2378 is a forward-looking, climate-aligned, and economically beneficial measure that modernizes Hawai'i's regulatory landscape to support clean, efficient, and resilient interisland transportation. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committees to pass this legislation.

Mahalo for your leadership and for the opportunity to provide testimony.





Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Transportation

Thursday, February 19, 2026
09:00 am
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 2378
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, Members of the Committees.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on **HB 2378**, which would exempt wing-in-ground (WIG) craft—commonly known as *Seaglidors*—from regulation under the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act (HRS 271G). This legislation is timely, necessary, and aligned with Hawai'i's climate, transportation, economic development, and resilience priorities.

This bill correctly highlights several statewide benefits of Seaglidors which include zero operational emissions, additional rapid interisland travel opportunities for healthcare, essential services, and employment. This is especially critical for neighbor island residents who rely on Oahu's medical facilities. Seaglidors also enhance resilience and emergency response operations by reaching communities isolated by disasters, support humanitarian missions, and strengthen food and medical supply continuity.

Workforce & Economic Development

The growth of a Seaglider industry in Hawai'i aligns with Hawai'i's and HTDC broader economic diversification goals of strengthening Hawai'i's innovation economy, creating high-skilled jobs, attracting sustainable infrastructure investment, and positioning the state as a global leader in clean maritime-aviation technologies

PUC Regulation Is Not Necessary and Would Slow Deployment

HRS 271G was devised to regulate traditional maritime shipping, ensuring continuity of service, preventing monopolistic practices, and overseeing tariffs and rates. It is not designed or intended for federally regulated craft like Seaglidors. Further no other state imposes PUC type regulations for water transportation this way. They rely upon:



- U.S. Coast Guard to provide consumer protection oversight for WIG craft.
- Federal maritime laws for vessel classification
- State boating laws for basic operational rules (navigation, speed limits, environmental rules)
- Seagliders are intended to complement air travel, not compete as water carriers as was the purpose of HRS 271G.

Applying HRS 271G would impose duplicative and costly regulation without improving safety, environmental, or consumer protection. Exempting WIG craft aligns Hawai'i's regulatory framework with federal jurisdiction and with how WIG and other aviation-adjacent technologies are treated nationwide. This legislation is not about favoring one company or technology—it is about removing structural barriers which prevent Hawai'i from adopting zero-emission transportation solutions.

HB2378 is a forward-looking, climate-aligned, and economically beneficial measure that modernizes Hawai'i's regulatory landscape to support clean, efficient, and resilient interisland transportation. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committees to pass this legislation.

Mahalo for your leadership and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 2:59:22 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Parsons	Kauai Climate Action Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Trusted Law Makers!

Testimony in Support of HB-2378 (Electric Seaglidern)

The Kauai Climate Action Coalition supports HB-2378 as a vital step in decarbonizing Hawai'i's inter-island transportation. Electric seaglidern offer a safe, affordable, and sustainable alternative to fossil-fueled transport. By supporting this bill, Hawai'i accelerates its clean energy goals and fosters local innovation.

Electric seaglidern not only reduce emissions, but they also promise lower operational costs. This means more affordable travel for residents and visitors alike, stimulating our local economy and creating green jobs.

Hawai'i should lead the way in clean aviation. Passing HB-2378 ensures we do. Let's electrify the future of inter-island travel, making it greener, quieter, and accessible to all.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Steve Parsons, Hanapēpē, Hawai'i
Kauai Climate Action Coalition Lead



February 19, 2026

The Honorable Darius Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tyson Miyake, Vice Chair

House Committee on Transportation

Re: HB 2378 – RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to support HB 2378, which exempts persons operating wing-in-ground craft from the application of the Hawai'i Water Carriers Act. Defines "wing-in-ground craft."

HMSA appreciates the legislature's willingness to explore innovative transportation approaches and emerging technologies that may improve connectivity across our state. Hawaii's unique geography can exacerbate challenges related to cost, access, and timeliness, especially for our neighbor island residents who must travel to Oahu to receive medical care. Seaglidors have the potential to become one of several complementary solutions that help address these challenges by expanding transportation options between our island communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Walden Au', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Walden Au
Director of Government Relations

Comments before
February 19, 2026
House Committee on Transportation

SUPPORTING
Senate Bill 2378
Relating to Seaglidern

Mike Ewall, Esq.
Founder & Executive Director
Energy Justice Network
215-436-9511
mike@energyjustice.net
www.EnergyJustice.net

Aloha Honorable Committee members. Energy Justice Network is a national organization supporting grassroots groups working to transition their communities from polluting and harmful energy and waste management practices to clean energy and zero waste solutions. In Hawai'i, we've been working with residents, members and member groups since our support and involvement was first solicited in 2015.

Please support Senate Bill 2378.

This is perhaps the most exciting development in clean transportation. Hawai'i relies heavily on air travel, resulting in high levels of fossil fuel consumption and resulting air pollution from aviation fuels.

The very misguided push toward biofuels and waste-based fuels threatens a different type of harm, with food vs. fuel pressure on land use when there is insufficient land and water for the state to be independent on either front, with only a tiny fraction of fuel needs being able to be produced in-state (the rest would be imported). Use of genetically modified crops and enzymes for biofuels poses additional biosecurity risks and increased herbicide uses. Flawed models make biofuels seem like a climate solution when they can actually be as bad or worse than fossil fuels due to indirect land use changes that climate scientists say the models get wrong. Waste-based fuels introduce toxicity issues and rely on experimental technologies that cannot operate economically or commercially.

Electrifying local air travel is the best solution. It skips the whole move to different burnable fuels, and avoids the costly problem that, under state law and the *Navahine F.* settlement, the state would be investing in two major transitions in under two decades: a shift from fossil fuels to biofuels and waste-based fuels, then another infrastructure change to electrofuels by 2045 because burnable carbon-based fuels are not zero emissions as required.

Seaglidern are already being explored in the state by the Hawaiian Seaglider Initiative. This is in partnership with the major airlines. See <https://www.hawaiiseaglider.org> and <https://www.hawaiiseaglider.org/april-press-release> (there are links to their social media at the bottom of the press release to follow their activities). Hawaiian Airlines announced this partnership four years ago in this press release: <https://thepointsguy.com/news/hawaiian-airlines-sea-gliders/>

The Regent Seaglider¹ seats 12 people so far, which is 12-15 times fewer than the planes typically used. Hawaiian Airlines uses a Boeing 717 (128 passengers) and Southwest uses a Boeing 737 MAX8 (175 passengers). Until they can seat more passengers, there would need to be more seaglidern to replace all interisland travel. To make this possible without congestion, there can be more departure and landing points, providing flexibility and convenience, as well as additional tourism economy opportunities.

¹ <https://www.regentcraft.com/seaglidern/viceroy>; see also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggK0vlqiSV4>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVMeSbgdOLO>, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-GP_0Cud98

As we point out in [our comments](#) on HDOT's [Draft Energy Security & Waste Reduction Plan](#), interisland travel can be fully electrified without having to have a 12-15-fold increase in aircraft and trips. Since many of the flights are surely for tourists, there are many who may not be in such a rush and might opt for a ferry between islands, which would be slower, but likely cheaper. It would allow for whale and dolphin watching and will reduce the numbers who have to be in planes. Prior controversies over the Super Ferry can hopefully be avoided. After all, plenty of cruise ships and cargo ships already go between the islands. Some passenger ships shouldn't make a major difference. These ferries can be fully electrified. There are already international cargo ships that have been electrified, some also using wind masts to harness wind power in a modern way. A combination of electric seaglidors and electric ferries could replace all inter-island air travel, reducing emissions significantly, boosting tourism, providing more travel flexibility, offering more competition. It also skips the entire costly "double transition" that would risk building up a biofuel economy just to tear it down early to replace it within the 19 years we have until the 2045 deadline for carbon-free transportation.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Mike Ewall, Esq.
Executive Director, Energy Justice Network
Co-Chair, Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Feb. 19, 2026, 9 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 430 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Transportation

Rep. Darius K. Kila, Chair

Rep. Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2378 — RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Aloha chair, vice chair and other committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [HB2378](#), which would exempt operators of wing-in-ground craft, or “seaglidors,” from the state Public Utility Commission’s water carrier regulations.

Seaglidors have the potential to revolutionize transportation in Hawaii by providing a low-cost, low-carbon and high-speed way to get between islands. They could fill an important niche in Hawaii’s transportation network and make it easier for residents to access healthcare, education and economic opportunities.

Seaglidors are vessels that can operate on water while in harbors and fly above the water while in transit. They glide at extremely low altitudes over the water to take advantage of the ground effect.

The ground effect is a phenomenon in which an aircraft’s wings generate less drag when the aircraft is close to a surface, such as water. This makes seaglidors more efficient than conventional planes.

Unfortunately, current law makes it unnecessarily difficult to operate seaglidors in Hawaii. Because seaglidors can operate on water while in harbors, they are regulated as water carriers, even though they operate more like aircraft.

Under the state’s water carrier law, most seaglider operators would have to receive a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the state Public Utilities Commission before operating in Hawaii. Receiving a

certificate from the commission is a long and difficult process that would act as a significant barrier to entry for seaglider operators.¹

Additionally, seaglider operators would have to receive the commission's approval before modifying their routes or changing the rates that they charge customers. This would make it difficult for seaglider operators to keep up with the rapid pace of change in an emerging market.

Furthermore, this measure would not cause safety risks for Hawaii residents who might use seagliders in the future. As the bill notes, the U.S. Coast Guard already has regulations in place to ensure the safe operation of seagliders, making further regulation by the state Public Utilities Commission unnecessary.

Seagliders could elevate the quality of life in Hawaii, but if we want them to take off, we need to give them enough room to extend their wings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ ["PUC Case 2004-0180,"](#) Hawaii Public Utilities Commission, accessed February 10, 2026.



**HAWAII COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

547 Queen Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Telephone: (808) 594-0300 Fax: (808) 587-0299
Web site: <http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hcda/>

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

STERLING HIGA
CHAIRPERSON

CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Statement of
CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
Executive Director
Hawai'i Community Development Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Thursday, February 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 2378
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Chairperson Kila, Vice Chairperson Miyake and members of the Committee.

The Hawai'i Community Development Authority (HCDA) supports HB 2378, which exempts wing-in-ground craft from public utilities commission jurisdiction.

The HCDA supports such technology for resiliency, and alternative transportation, possibilities for the state, especially if a terminal and port is located at Kewalo Basin Harbor.

We are a member of the Hawaii Seaglider Initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 12:37:26 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members!

HB2378 helps pave the way for seaglidors! Electric seaglidors are emerging technology where people can get between islands on clean energy with planes that glide just above the water. They're a great alternative to burning jet fuel or the supposedly "sustainable" aviation fuel that isn't.

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 3:54:14 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Stover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:19:19 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:17:33 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kathy Shimata & I live in Honolulu. I urge you to support HB2378 because it helps pave the way for seaglidors! Electric [seaglidors](#) are emerging technology where people can get between islands on clean energy with planes that glide just above the water. They're a great alternative to burning jet fuel or the supposedly "sustainable" aviation fuel that isn't.

Please support HB2378. We need interisland transportation that is clean.

Mahalo,

Kathy Shimata

February 16th, 2026

Representative Darius Kila
Chair House Transportation Chair
State Capitol Rm 322
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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

Our islands must continue to seek innovative and sustainable alternatives for inter-island transportation, which is why I am in strong support of HB2378.

Regent Craft's seaglider technology directly addresses critical environmental concerns. It is fully electric, capable of utilizing renewable energy sources, and is projected to operate at approximately one-third the cost of conventional aviation and marine transportation options. This represents a significant opportunity to reduce emissions while improving affordability and efficiency.

Seagliders will also allow us to better serve underserved communities by expanding access through our harbor system, helping to alleviate congestion at our airports and providing more centralized points of access on each island. This flexibility enables the development of route structures that more effectively connect our islands to essential services such as healthcare, as well as supporting food sustainability and the delivery of fresher local products.

Allowing seagliders to operate exempt from Public Utilities Commission jurisdiction will foster a more competitive inter-island transportation environment—one that ultimately benefits the people of Hawai'i through increased options, improved access, and lower costs.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB2378 and respectfully ask for your leadership in advancing this measure so that our communities may benefit from this innovative alternative form of transportation.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Uchiyama
Former President & CEO
Island Air

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:36:38 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bobbie Best	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Electric seaglidgers are a great alternative to burning jet fuel

HB-2378

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:03:44 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Ishii	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill HB2378 to exempt persons operating wing-in-ground craft from the Public Utility Commission's jurisdiction and let the free market determine the value of this transportation mode. In addition, there are existing and will be future transportation modes which will be similar to or directly compete with the wing-in-ground craft.