

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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LAND
STATE PARK

**Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND**

**Thursday, February 12, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2426
RELATING TO STATE PARKS**

House Bill 2426 authorizes and appropriates funds for the expansion of Wailuku River State Park. **The Department supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

The Department agrees that promotion of mental and physical well-being and community connection is important. The Department also appreciates the intent to expand Wailuku River State Park and preserve more open space in perpetuity. Staff from the Department have conducted a cursory site visit, and the parcels appear to possess public park values.

The Department offers the following considerations: (a) the Department cannot purchase lands at higher than appraised value; (b) due diligence will be time consuming and require significant funding; (c) upon acquisition, the Department would request CIP funds for planning, design and construction of park facilities; and (d) the Division of State Parks cannot take on additional lands and responsibilities without adequate resources so therefore would request that the Legislature establish new staff positions to maintain and manage the new acquisition.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:10:42 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Public access to open space is critical for mental and physical well being of the community. It is one of the things that can be done to support the health of the community and invest in the future.

I support SB 2426, please do the same.

Sarah Anderson

Honokaa, Hawai'i

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:18:07 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allen Novak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wish to testify in strong support of HB2426.

I am a resident of lower Kaumana, but not a resident in the immediate vicinity of the proposed park.

Approval of this bill will assure that the land is used for the greatest public benefit and maintain the integrity of the neighborhood. Other uses of this property will not have the benefits of a park as proposed in this bill. The land should be acquired now. Planning for use, improvements and structures can follow.

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:04:57 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James C Clark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I will be brief. This area has dozens, maybe hundreds, of walkers daily. They walk on a busy street with lots of blind curves and vehicles that routinely exceed the speed limit. Getting these walkers, including me, off the street and into a lovely park, with a restroom, would make the whole process far more enjoyable and healthy. Build community, provide a safe place for kids to walk, add to the general happiness. Hard to see a downside.

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:24:29 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Ichinose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB2426 – Wailuku River State Park Expansion

I am writing in strong support of HB2426, the Wailuku River State Park Expansion bill. I believe this proposal will provide meaningful and lasting benefits to our community by preserving open space, supporting healthy lifestyles, and protecting the natural character of the area.

Having previously lived in Texas during and after military service, I regularly used similar natural parks and green spaces for walking, exercise, and recreation. These areas became essential community resources—places that promoted physical health, mental well-being, and connection to nature without requiring extensive travel. I would greatly value having a comparable natural area within town here. Currently, most accessible hiking and outdoor recreation opportunities require a 30–45 minute drive, which limits regular use for many residents.

As a mother, it is especially important to me that my children have rich, meaningful opportunities to explore and connect with nature close to home. Access to natural spaces fosters curiosity, resilience, and a sense of responsibility for the environment, while also supporting physical health and emotional well-being. A natural park in the Wailuku River area would provide a safe, accessible place for families to spend time outdoors, build lifelong habits of active living, and develop a deeper appreciation for Hawai‘i’s unique natural resources.

I strongly prefer that this land remain a natural area rather than being converted into a manicured park or, worse, a new development. Preserving the space in a more natural state aligns with conservation values and provides a more authentic outdoor experience. Additionally, further development would place added strain on already outdated infrastructure, while a state park expansion would enhance quality of life without those negative impacts.

HB2426 represents a thoughtful investment in community health, environmental stewardship, and sustainable land use. I respectfully urge lawmakers to support this bill and help ensure that the Wailuku River area remains a protected, accessible, and valued resource for current and future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Ichinose

Community Member

Hilo, Hawai'i

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:40:12 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vanessa Cianci	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:49:58 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Hansen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, we need this bill HB 2426 to enhance recreation and safe routes to school!

Mahalo

Elizabeth Hansen, Hakalau HI 96710

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:13:46 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward Johnston	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This 283 acres Park expansion will help residents in many ways- hiking trails and open space near where there are many houses. This is a great opportunity for neighborhood gatherings and will actually, in the long run, reduce traffic congestion.

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:32:07 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Osborn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am for bill HB2426

Please do not sell this property to a developer!

Our family has lived on upper Ainako Avenue for 70 years and my self for 53 years. I have witnessed what happened when a developer came in and bulldozed the property (I believe this was back in the 80's) destroying the forest and one section of the river! This forest (before it was destroyed) was beautiful and majestic! It has taken over 20 plus years for it to grow back (it will never be the same as it once was) and for the section of the river that had ceased to flow (after they bulldozed) to finally start up again. The river that flows through the upper Ainako area is fed from underground and if a developer was to develop anything in or around the river and the surrounding areas, I'm 100% sure that it would destroy the existing river and underground waterways and springs! I am in tears writing this because this area holds a special place for me, it's where I grew up and lived for my whole life, although I have seen the changes in the years, I can't imagine not having the certainty of our area ceased to exist. I am all for a natural area park for people to enjoy, the one thing I would hope to see when it is made into a park, is the reforestation of native endemic trees and plants throughout the entire park! This is the chance to malama our aina and bring back what once was! There are numerous organizations that work with Hawaiian endemic trees and plants that would be a wonderful collaboration to create! Not to mention the numerous I'o that live and thrive in and around the area! We must ensure that we preserve what little is left here on our island and prevent our island from turning into how Honolulu looks! So in closing again I am for bill HB2426 Mahalo for your time, Jennifer Osborn

HB-2426

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:02:48 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/12/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JARNELL OSBORN	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in favor of this bill and support the expansion of Wailuku River State Park to include the 283 acres as a natural reserve with public access to enhance recreational use, safe routes to school and protect our natural resources through conservation. Restoration of native plants and habitat for wildlife. I'O that we see daily in this beautiful area.