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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committee on  
FINANCE

Tuesday, March 3, 2026  
10:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 2490, HOUSE DRAFT 2  
RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE

House Bill 2490, House Draft 2 proposes to establish a five-year Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) for the preservation of Mantokuji Bay. The bill would exempt the pilot program from multiple state and county regulatory requirements and require the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) to conduct a streamlined historic preservation review. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of the proposed measure and offers the following comments.**

House Bill 2490, House Draft 2 requires SHPD to conduct a streamlined historic preservation review of the proposed program. The streamlined review requires a project proponent to conduct a literature review and field inspection. It also specifies that any iwi kupuna identified while implementing the program are under the purview of the Maui Lana'i Island Burial Council and descendants to determine treatment measures, rather than SHPD. These are reasonable requirements of the program's expedited historic preservation review. SHPD, however, recommends one amendment:

Page 4, Lines 15-20

“(c) The state historic preservation division shall conduct a streamlined historic preservation review to elevate measures approved under the pilot program. The state historic preservation division shall require an archaeological literature review and field inspection of historic properties and historic Native Hawaiian burial sites within [archaeological and historical documentation for] the area of potential effect and the project environment. The division may also require

archaeological monitoring for all project areas determined by the division to be sensitive for iwi kupuna where ground disturbing activities will occur.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**TESTIMONY PROVIDING COMMENTS ON HOUSE BILL 2490 HD2  
RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE**

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā  
(House Committee on Finance)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i  
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 3, 2026

10:00 am

Lumi 308

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS** on HB2490 HD2. OHA recognizes the serious and ongoing erosion impacts affecting Mantokuji Bay, including threats to the historic Paia Mantokuji Soto Mission and adjacent cemetery. We agree that addressing erosion at the scale of an entire coastal cell—rather than through continued parcel-by-parcel responses—is an appropriate and necessary conversation for the State.

**OHA’s primary concern, however, is that the measure would allow the proposed regional coastal remediation program to be exempted from the statutory frameworks the Legislature has established to govern shoreline management (Section 2, subsection (h)).** While the bill does not expressly authorize shoreline hardening, it would allow for exemptions from provisions that otherwise restrict or carefully regulate such structures. Those laws were developed in response to well-documented cumulative impacts of shoreline armoring and reflect decades of scientific analysis and policy deliberation. Several private parcels within Mantokuji Bay appear to be hardened. Scientific findings consistently demonstrate that individual shoreline armoring can exacerbate erosion on adjacent properties and contribute to long-term beach loss across an entire coastal cell, likely contributing to the serious conditions in the bay. The 2017 *Hawai‘i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report* identifies shoreline armoring as a primary driver of beach loss statewide and emphasizes avoidance, relocation, and managed

retreat in areas experiencing chronic erosion.<sup>1</sup> Legislative findings adopted in Act 16 (2020) similarly acknowledge that hardening undermines long-term coastal resilience.

Given this context, we are concerned that exempting a regional program from existing coastal management requirements could undermine the careful balance the State has struck in managing shoreline resources. If a regional remediation effort is to proceed at Mantokuji Bay, it should do so within the established permitting and environmental review framework. Environmental review under Chapter 343 ensures that cumulative impacts, sediment transport dynamics, alternatives such as nature-based approaches or managed retreat, and public trust implications are fully evaluated before significant shoreline interventions occur. The regulatory structure currently in place was created with these broader considerations in mind. Creating project-specific exemptions risks setting precedent for bypassing those safeguards in other erosion-prone areas. **Accordingly, OHA recommends removing subsection (h) of Section 2, to ensure that long-term resilience and resource protection remain central to the State's approach.**

Regarding historic preservation review, OHA supports the amendments in subsection (e) that clarify procedures when Native Hawaiian burials may be encountered and ensure the Island Burial Councils have adequate time to consult with lineal and cultural descendants. OHA also appreciates the inclusion of consultation with our office. **OHA additionally requests consultation at the initial stage of the historic review process to ensure consistency with our statutory responsibilities. Accordingly, OHA suggests adding the following language to subsection (c) at page 4, line 20:**

"The applicant shall consult with the office of Hawaiian affairs and provide the office an opportunity to review and comment on the archaeological literature review findings and any effect determinations prior to any final approval under this section."

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to the careful consideration of our **COMMENTS** on HB2490 HD2.

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. 2017. *Hawai'i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report*. Prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc. and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands, under the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources Contract No: 64064.

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Meia o Ke Kalana o Maui



**J. KAPONO‘AI MOLITAU**  
Po‘o o Ka ‘Oihana Kumuwaiwai  
‘Ōiwi

**KEKAI ROBINSON**  
Hope Po‘o o Ka ‘Oihana  
Kumuwaiwai ‘Ōiwi

**KA ‘OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI ‘ŌIWI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ‘ŌIWI RESOURCES**  
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200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
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pūnaewele: [www.mauicounty.gov](http://www.mauicounty.gov) leka  
uila: [oiwi@co.maui.hi.us](mailto:oiwi@co.maui.hi.us)

TO: Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
John Kapono‘ai Molitau, Director of ‘Ōiwi Resources

DATE: March 2, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB2490 HD2**  
**RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE AND ESTABLISHING A COASTAL**  
**RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM FOR MANTOKUJI BAY, PĀ‘IA, MAUI**

Aloha kākou:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure establishing a five-year coastal resilience pilot program for Mantokuji Bay in Pā‘ia, Maui. The intent and overall framework of this bill aligns closely with our strategic mission to steward natural and cultural resources through mālama ‘āina, cultural integrity, and intergenerational responsibility. This pilot program presents an important opportunity to demonstrate how comprehensive coastal resilience efforts can protect cultural sites, infrastructure, and natural systems simultaneously. For Maui—where erosion on that increasingly threatens iwi kūpuna, wahi pana, and community access—this measure reflects the type of coordinated, culturally grounded response that communities have long called for.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Natural and cultural resources are inseparable. Mantokuji Bay exemplifies this reality. Accelerated coastal erosion has resulted not only in environmental degradation, but in the loss of iwi kūpuna, damage to wahi pana, and growing threats to the Pā‘ia Mantokuji—an irreplaceable cultural and spiritual site with statewide significance.
2. At the county level, the Department has been actively engaged in responding to erosion-related cultural impacts, including coordination on shoreline monitoring, consultation regarding exposed burials, support for the respectful treatment and temporary protection of iwi kūpuna, and guidance on inadvertent discovery protocols during public works, emergency response, and shoreline stabilization efforts.

3. The emphasis on nature-based, hybrid, and adaptive resilience strategies reflects approaches the County supports across Maui, particularly in areas where parcel-by-parcel shoreline hardening has proven ineffective and culturally disruptive.
4. We strongly support the bill's inclusion of cultural safeguards and robust cultural oversight during implementation. Streamlined regulatory processes can be effective when paired with clear cultural guardrails, adequate resourcing, and meaningful consultation. Importantly, the bill preserves Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights under Article XII, Section 7 of the Hawai'i State Constitution, maintains compliance with applicable federal environmental laws, and retains historic preservation protections under Chapter 6E, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.
5. Requirements for archaeological literature review, on-site archaeological monitoring with stop-work authority, and inadvertent discovery protocols for iwi kūpuna reflect best practices consistently advanced by the county in coordination with state and federal partners. These measures are essential to ensuring that urgent coastal interventions do not result in additional cultural harm and that ancestral remains and cultural artifacts are treated with dignity and in accordance with protocol.

We also offer the following **COMMENTS** on this measure to strengthen implementation and ensure alignment with cultural stewardship principles:

- **Formalize county coordination** by ensuring ongoing consultation with county cultural resource staff throughout project planning, implementation, and monitoring phases.
- **Prioritize early cultural consultation**, including engagement with lineal descendants, cultural practitioners, and affected community organizations where feasible.
- **Ensure adequate resourcing** for archaeological monitoring, cultural oversight, and inadvertent discovery response, recognizing that these are core safeguards rather than ancillary costs.
- **Maintain transparency and accountability** by clearly documenting decision-making, monitoring outcomes, and cultural findings in the pilot program's annual reports to the Legislature.
- **Apply an adaptive management framework** that allows coastal measures to be modified in response to environmental data, cultural impacts, or community concerns identified during implementation.
- **Use the pilot to inform statewide policy**, including recommendations for how comprehensive, culturally grounded coastal management approaches may be responsibly replicated in other high-risk coastal areas.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
John Kapono'ai Molitau, Director of 'Ōiwi Resources  
County of Maui



House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 10 AM Hearing in Conference Room 308 on  
HB 2492, HD2 Relating to Coastal Resilience

TESTIMONY

Douglas Meller, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii has major concerns with HB 2492, HD2.**

There is no public information and the League has no position concerning planning, design, or funding of the proposed pilot project. However, because Hawaii's normal regulatory procedures and requirements facilitate informed public participation in management of coastal development, we oppose HB 2492, HD2 exemption of the project from Chapters 343, 183C, and 205A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). Moreover, neither the DBEDT nor the OPSD has ever publicly requested to exempt this pilot project from public disclosure and evaluation under Chapter 343, HRS; or from DLNR/BLNR determination of the "regulatory" shoreline under Chapter 205A, HRS; or from DLNR/BLNR Conservation District regulation under Chapter 183C, HRS; or from Maui Planning Commission special management and shoreline setback area regulation under Chapter 205A, HRS.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



Written Statement of  
**DR. PATRICK SULLIVAN**  
**FOUNDER & CEO, OCEANIT**

Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Monday, March 3, 2026  
10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

In Support of  
**HB2490 HD2 RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE**

To: Chair Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair Representative Jenna Takenouchi,  
and Members of the Committee  
From: Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Founder & CEO  
Re: Testimony in Support of HB2490 HD2

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

Oceanit Laboratories, Inc. strongly supports HB2490 HD2, which establishes a five-year Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism for the restoration and preservation of Mantokuji Bay, Paia, Maui and urges the Finance Committee to pass it.

Oceanit is a forty-year-old Hawai'i-based science and engineering firm with deep experience in coastal resilience, infrastructure protection, and environmental monitoring. We have seen firsthand how Hawai'i's current parcel-by-parcel regulatory approach fails our coastlines. Sediment transport, wave energy, and shoreline dynamics do not respect property boundaries. When individual landowners harden their shoreline in isolation, they often accelerate erosion on neighboring properties and degrade the very ecosystems that provide natural coastal protection. The result across Hawai'i has been decades of piecemeal interventions that make the overall problem worse.

HB2490 HD2 represents a fundamentally better approach. By treating Mantokuji Bay as the natural coastal cell it is, approximately one mile of interconnected shoreline bounded by headlands, this bill enables the kind of comprehensive, science-based intervention that coastal engineers and geologists have long advocated for. The bill's streamlined regulatory framework addresses a real and critical barrier: overlapping state and county jurisdictions and rigid permitting

criteria that were never designed for regional coastal management make it effectively impossible to implement bay-wide solutions under current law.

The urgency is clear: The Mantokuji Bay coastline is retreating at approximately 1.6 feet per year. Ancestral burials at the Mantokuji Temple, the oldest Soto Zen Buddhist temple in the State, established in 1906 and listed on the Hawai'i Register of Historic Places, have already fallen into the ocean. The Hana Highway, the sole transportation corridor for northeast Maui communities, is increasingly exposed to coastal hazards. These losses are irreversible, and the window for effective intervention is narrowing.

We are grateful to the House Committees on Water & Land and Economic Development & Technology for moving and strengthening this measure by incorporating Native Hawaiian burial treatment provisions developed in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD), ensuring Island Burial Council authority, full descendant consultation, and mandatory work stoppage upon any discovery of iwi kūpuna. All federal regulatory requirements are maintained, including Army Corps permits, NHPA Section 106 review, Endangered Species Act consultation, and Clean Water Act certification. Article XII, Section 7 of the Hawai'i State Constitution protecting traditional and customary Native Hawaiian rights is explicitly preserved.

The annual legislative reporting requirement (Section 2(j)) and automatic sunset on June 30, 2031, ensure full accountability. The pilot program requires no state appropriation; all costs are borne by the applicant. If this model proves effective, the annual reports will provide the Legislature with the evidence base needed to determine whether to extend the approach to other threatened coastlines statewide.

HB2490 HD2 has passed two House committees with the improvements we and SHPD recommended. This is a well-crafted bill that balances urgency with protection and we strongly urge the Committee to pass HB2490 HD2.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-2490-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:03:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eric Moto	Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission	Support	In Person

Comments:

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

I am Eric Moto, president of the Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission's administrative board and I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT of House Bill 2490, which would establish a pilot program to restore and protect our Mantokuji Bay.

My family has been a part of the Mantokuji congregation for four generations spanning many decades. For over a century, this sacred ground has been the resting place for our community's ancestors, and the only temple on Maui of the Soto Shu Buddhist sect.

Today, I watch in desperation as rising sea levels, and stronger and more frequent wave conditions relentlessly claim more and more of the beach and the land we have always considered sacred and eternal. Cemetery gravestones have tumbled into the surf and remains of our grandparents wash into the sea. This is not just property loss, but a spiritual and existential crisis that cuts to the heart of who we are as a community.

And the crisis extends far beyond our temple. The entire Mantokuji Bay shoreline is eroding, threatening neighboring homeowners, the Hana Highway, and the habitat where endangered sea turtles come to rest. We have learned that protecting just Mantokuji's property will not work. The ocean does not care about property lines. The bay is a single natural ecosystem connecting all of us and it must be restored as a whole.

Mantokuji has tried for about ten years and spent close to a million dollars to address this crisis through existing regulatory processes, all while fulfilling every requirement and rule and document request. But this process has not produced a long-term solution, only a temporary sandbag structure fighting a losing battle to hold back the sea.

HB2490 offers a path forward and can serve as an example of how to move forward as legislators are asked time and again to help save and protect Hawaii's eroding shorelines. It will take a comprehensive, bay-wide approach to coastal restoration while maintaining protections for Native Hawaiian rights and the environment. This is not about saving just our temple, it is about restoring the entire bay for the benefit of all who live on Maui, all who visit our island, and all those who depend upon this shoreline.

I humbly ask for your support of HB2490, independent of other shoreline erosion-related bills, and for this opportunity to testify. Mahalo.



## Testimony on HB2490 – Relating to Coastal Resilience

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

First, I want to respectfully acknowledge the deeply painful situation unfolding at the bay at Mantokuji Mission in Pā'ia. Testimony submitted by members of the Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission describes families witnessing gravestones and ancestral remains being exposed and washed into the ocean. For many families whose loved ones have been laid to rest there for generations, this is not simply a shoreline management issue, it is a profound cultural and spiritual crisis.

Places like Mantokuji carry the history and memory of our communities. They deserve our utmost respect, care, and compassion as we seek solutions.

At the same time, we must also acknowledge an equally important reality: **coastal erosion is occurring, and it is accelerating.** The ocean does not respect property lines or historical boundaries, and Mantokuji Bay functions as a single coastal system shaped by waves, sediment transport, and sea level rise. Ignoring these coastal processes or attempting to override them through short-term measures will not produce lasting solutions.

If anything, the painful situation unfolding in Pā'ia demonstrates why Hawai'i must begin planning thoughtfully for long-term coastal adaptation.

I appreciate the intent behind HB2490 to explore regional approaches to shoreline resilience. However, **Section 2(e) of this bill raises serious concerns and should be deleted.**

Section 2(e) proposes sweeping exemptions from several of Hawai'i's foundational environmental and coastal protection laws, including environmental review requirements and Coastal Zone Management safeguards. These laws exist to ensure that projects in Hawai'i's sensitive coastal zones are carefully evaluated for impacts to beaches, ecosystems, cultural resources, and public access.

Removing these safeguards particularly when the bill does not clearly define the specific project or interventions that may occur creates the possibility that significant shoreline alterations could occur **without proper environmental review, scientific analysis, or community participation.**

Even more concerning, **this provision would set a dangerous statewide precedent.** If the Legislature establishes that coastal projects can bypass environmental review and shoreline

protections through special exemptions, it opens the door for similar requests across Hawai‘i’s coastlines. What begins as a pilot project in one bay could quickly become a model used to sidestep the very safeguards designed to protect our beaches and public trust resources statewide.

Hawai‘i has spent decades building a careful coastal management framework precisely because we have learned, often the hard way, that shoreline armoring and poorly planned interventions can accelerate beach loss and harm coastal ecosystems. Weakening these safeguards now would move us backward.

If the State is going to pursue a pilot program in a culturally and environmentally sensitive location like Mantokuji Bay, the process should involve **more transparency, more science, and more public engagement, not less.**

A meaningful pilot program should examine a full range of coastal adaptation strategies, including:

- Nature-based shoreline restoration
- Sediment management and dune systems
- Nearshore ecosystem and reef health
- Regional shoreline planning
- And importantly, **the feasibility of managed retreat where coastal hazards cannot be sustainably mitigated**

Managed retreat is not an easy conversation, but it is increasingly recognized worldwide as an essential component of responsible coastal planning in areas experiencing chronic erosion and sea level rise. Any serious resilience effort should evaluate it comprehensively alongside other options.

The situation in Pā‘ia deserves thoughtful, respectful solutions that honor the cultural and spiritual significance of the site while also acknowledging the physical realities of a changing coastline.

Compassion for the families affected and stewardship of Hawai‘i’s public shorelines are not opposing goals. In fact, the most respectful path forward is one grounded in transparency, science, and long-term planning.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **delete Section 2(e)** and ensure that any pilot program proceeds with full environmental review and includes a comprehensive evaluation of nature-based solutions and managed retreat strategies.

I also call attention to **Section 2(c)**, which requires determination by State Historic Preservation Division **within 45 days** and this **may also set dangerous precedent statewide.**

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Kai Nishiki & Sarah Freistat Pajimola,  
Executive Directors, Maui Nui Resiliency Hui

## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026

**RE: HB 2490, HD2– RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE**

**Hearing:** 3.3.26, 10:00am

**Position: STRONGLY SUPPORT**

My name is Cathleen Murayama, and I am a member of Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission. I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2490, HD2, which would establish a pilot program to protect Mantokuji Bay.

My family has been part of the Mantokuji congregation since its founding in 1906. My grandfather, Sokyo Ueoka, was the founding minister of Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission. For over a century, this sacred ground has been the final resting place for our community's ancestors. The sandy beach I grew up cherishing is no longer there to share with my grandsons, 8 years and 2 years. Most recently in January, the bank that my grandson would stand on to view the turtles who come to rest is no longer there.

Today, I watch in horror as the ocean steals what we have always considered eternal. Each year the winter swells continue to claim gravestones that once stood in neat rows and eats away at the bank. This January, it finally claimed an ironwood tree on the bank that is no longer. The remains of our kupuna – our grandparents and great-grandparents – wash into the sea. More than property loss – it is a spiritual crisis that cuts to the heart of who we are as a community.

This crisis extends far beyond our temple. The entire Mantokuji Bay shoreline is eroding – threatening homeowners, the Hana Highway, and the habitat where the endangered sea turtles rest. We learned that protecting just our property will not work. The bay is a single natural ecosystem, and it must be restored as a whole.

We have tried for years to address this through existing regulatory processes, but those processes have not produced a long-term solution – only sandbags holding back the sea. Meanwhile, with every winter swell, the shoreline retreats another foot, then another. We cannot wait any longer!

HB 2490, HD2 offers a path forward. It takes a comprehensive, bay-wide approach to coastal restoration while maintaining protections for Native Hawaiian rights and the environment. This is not about just our temple – it is about restoring the entire bay for the benefit of everyone who lives here, visits here, and depends on this shoreline.

I urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Cathleen Murayama  
Member  
Paia Mantokuj Soto Zen Mission