

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

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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2599
RELATING TO AQUATIC PROTECTION

House Bill 2599 proposes to require the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to manage the aquatic life and aquatic resources of the State with the highest priority given to protecting, restoring, and maintaining ecosystem integrity and use the best scientific data available. It would also require DAR to set goals to substantially increase coral-reef resilience around O'ahu and to develop a framework to meet those goals, with annual reports to the Legislature. **The Department supports this bill and offers the following comments.**

Coral reef ecosystems statewide, and particularly on O'ahu, have experienced significant degradation due to long-term, cumulative impacts from multiple sources, including coastal development, watershed degradation, recreational and commercial overuse, invasive species, fishing pressure, and warming ocean temperatures. While halting or reversing this decline can seem daunting—especially given global climate stressors—coral reef ecosystems are inherently resilient, and evidence shows they can recover when adverse impacts are reduced. In most cases, however, there is no single solution. Threats to ecosystem health vary by location, and identifying the most effective management actions requires a careful understanding of local ecosystem drivers and dynamics. To support this, managers must rely on the best available science, integrating both western scientific approaches and local ecological knowledge.

DAR understands the importance of ecosystem-based management, as well as the importance of involving local resource users, and has developed a wholistic nearshore

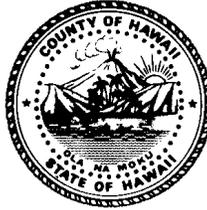
management strategy called the Holomua Marine Initiative (Holomua). Holomua, which in the Hawaiʻian language means “to progress and move forward into the future,” brings local fishers, cultural practitioners, and community representatives together with scientists and resource managers to collaboratively develop island-scale management actions aimed at improving the health of nearshore resources. Importantly, these actions extend beyond fishing regulations to address other key drivers of ecosystem integrity, including water quality and quantity, land-based sources of pollution, commercial and recreational use, and degraded habitats. Addressing these issues requires coordination across multiple agencies and authorities and depends on strong partnerships to achieve shared goals for nearshore ecosystem health and coral reef resilience.

Holomua was first launched on Maui in October 2022 as a pilot management planning process. The Maui planning team is currently finalizing its proposed management plan and draft rules for Maui, and DAR will be launching the Holomua process on Hawaiʻi island this summer. It may be another two years before the Holomua process is launched on Oʻahu.

The requirement for DAR, by July 1, 2027, to publish goals to increase coral reef resilience on Oʻahu by December 2030 and to create a framework for meeting these goals is ambitious, but it would help expedite the Holomua management planning process when it comes Oʻahu. Temporary rulemaking authority could also be a useful tool for DAR to implement expedited management actions if deemed appropriate. The Department appreciates the requirement to include recommendations for additional funding, positions, and legislation in each annual report and hopes the Legislature will provide the necessary support for DAR’s Holomua efforts.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

HEATHER L. KIMBALL
COUNCIL DISTRICT 1
(North Hilo, Hāmākua, and portion of
Waimea)



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HAWAI‘I COUNTY COUNCIL
25 Aupuni Street, Ste. 1402, Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

February 9, 2026

House Committee on Water and Land
Honorable Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Submission via online testimony only

RE: STRONG SUPPORT – H.B. 2599 – Relating to Aquatic Protection

I write in strong support of H.B. 2599, which strengthens the mandate of the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) within the Department of Land and Natural Resources to prioritize ecosystem integrity and use the best available scientific data in managing Hawai‘i’s aquatic life and resources.

The Hawai‘i County Council has adopted a resolution formally supporting this effort, recognizing the urgent need for decisive, science-based management of our nearshore ecosystems. Coral reefs are foundational to Hawai‘i’s economy, food security, shoreline protection, and cultural identity. As outlined in the bill, reefs provide coastal protection, sand production, fisheries, recreation, and spiritual connection, yet are increasingly threatened by warming oceans, land-based runoff, sedimentation, and overuse.

This measure appropriately elevates ecosystem integrity as the highest management priority and requires DAR to establish clear goals to substantially increase coral-reef resilience, supported by a defined framework and annual reporting to the Legislature. The framework’s inclusion of water quality, herbivore biomass, fisheries management, enforcement, coral restoration, and recreational-use impacts reflects a comprehensive, systems-based approach.

On Hawai‘i Island, we are witnessing firsthand the cumulative effects of climate change, land use, and increasing ocean pressures. Clear statutory direction prioritizing ecosystem integrity strengthens interagency coordination and reinforces the science-based stewardship necessary across all counties. The reporting requirements and structured goal-setting create transparency and accountability while allowing adaptive management informed by emerging science. This approach aligns with resilience-based governance and ensures that public policy keeps pace with accelerating environmental change.

For these reasons, and consistent with the Hawai‘i County Council’s adopted resolution, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass H.B. 2599. Mahalo for your leadership in protecting Hawai‘i’s marine ecosystems for future generations.

Sincerely,

HEATHER L. KIMBALL

HAWAI'I OCEAN LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE



February 10, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature
House Committee on Water and Land

Re: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** for HB 2599, Relating to Aquatic Protection

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and esteemed members of the committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force—a coalition of more than 150 individuals across over 20 organizations statewide—**strongly supports** HB 2599, relating to aquatic protection. This measure requires the Division of Aquatic Resources within the Department of Land and Natural Resources to prioritize ecosystem integrity in managing Hawai'i's aquatic resources, use the best available science, and establish coral-reef resilience goals for O'ahu with a framework and annual reports to the Legislature.

Healthy coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems are vital to Hawai'i's cultural heritage, food security, shoreline protection, and economy. Yet our reefs continue to face unprecedented threats from climate change, pollution, invasive species, and unsustainable use. HB 2599 provides a long-overdue statutory directive that elevates the protection, restoration, and maintenance of ecosystem integrity to the highest priority in aquatic resource management.

By centering the use of the best available scientific data and requiring measurable coral-reef resilience goals and a clear implementation framework, this measure will improve transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in state aquatic management. Annual reporting to the Legislature will ensure ongoing evaluation of progress and adaptive decision-making grounded in the latest science.

For kanaka maoli and visitor ocean users alike, healthy reefs are not optional—they are essential. HB 2599 strengthens the State's ability to steward these irreplaceable ecosystems, protect reef-dependent species, and safeguard the ecological services that sustain island communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 2599.

The Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that advance cesspool conversion and wastewater management, protect Hawai'i's coral reefs and reef fish, ensure transparent and sustainable implementation of the Green Fee program and long-term environmental staffing, and support other measures that strengthen Hawai'i's coastal and marine ecosystems.



To: The Honorable Representative Mark Hashem, Chair, the Honorable Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Water and Land.

From: Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: Hearing **HB2599 RELATING TO AQUATIC PROTECTION**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee on Water and Land.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (HIROC) is a group of scientists, educators, filmmakers and environmental advocates who have been working since 2017 to protect Hawaii's coral reefs and ocean.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB2599!

Coral reefs are dying around the world because of ocean heating and land-based pollution such as sediments and wastewater. Overfishing of herbivores that clean the reef of smothering algae is also an important factor on Oahu. Coral reef decline is a huge problem for Hawaii, where reefs protect our shorelines and beaches and avoid over \$836 million in flood damage to property and economic activity value per year according to research by the US Geologic Survey. **Our reefs need greater protection!**

This bill would require the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) Division of Aquatic Resources to manage the aquatic life and aquatic resources of the State with the

highest priority given to protecting, restoring, and maintaining ecosystem integrity and use the best scientific data available.

The bill also would require the Division of Aquatic Resources to set goals to substantially increase coral-reef resilience around Oahu and develop a framework to meet those goals.

Please pass this bill to protect the resilience of our coral reefs!

Mahalo!

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

February 10, 2026

9:00 AM

Conference Room 411

In **SUPPORT** of **HB2599**: RELATING TO AQUATIC PROTECTION

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

On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HB2599, which provides the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) with much-needed direction in its mission to uphold the public trust in our nearshore resources.

Hawai'i's nearshore ecosystems - particularly around O'ahu - are experiencing rapid declines driven by land-based pollution, climate-driven bleaching, sedimentation, invasive species, and cumulative overuse. These declines have had and will continue to have a significant and growing impact on the public interest. The coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems we are witnessing being degraded are essential to our cultural and ecological integrity, food security, climate resilience, and economy, including by supporting subsistence and nearshore fisheries, protecting shorelines from erosion and sea-level rise, maintaining biodiversity and habitat integrity, and sustaining recreation and tourism. Without intervention, many of O'ahu's impaired reef ecosystems will continue to degrade or collapse in the coming decades, to the significant detriment of present and future generations.

Unfortunately, despite the public trust's mandate that our natural and cultural resources be proactively protected for both present and future generations, and not "passively allow[ed] to fall into ruin,"¹ DAR does not appear to have a consistent and coordinated plan to address the pronounced and ongoing declines in O'ahu's nearshore resources. For example, despite its stated commitment to supporting marine resource management through community collaboration, DAR has instead dedicated significant amounts of its very limited staff time and resources to develop proposed regulations for the reopening of the aquarium collection industry – an industry and a proposal that has been strongly and continuously opposed by the very communities it is purporting to partner with.

HB2599 accordingly provides DAR with a much-needed vision and direction for its future work, by:

1. Prioritizing ecosystem integrity in the management of Hawai'i's aquatic resources;
2. Requiring DAR to use the best available science to guide decisions; and
3. Establishing clear coral-reef resilience goals for O'ahu, supported by a framework and annual progress reports to the Legislature.

¹ Ching v. Case, 449 P.3d 1146 (Hawai'i 2019).



This mandate aligns with modern ecosystem-based management approaches and provides needed structure for DAR's long-term resilience planning.

Importantly, HB2599 does not impose new rules or restrictions on fishers and other ocean users, does not mandate closures or create enforcement requirements, and does not require appropriations this fiscal year. This bill simply clarifies DAR's priorities, encourages improved coordination, and provides for greater transparency and accountability in its fulfillment of the public trust, without creating unfunded mandates or regulatory burdens. While primarily focused on O'ahu, where the situation has grown particularly dire, this measure could create replicable strategies that can also benefit our neighbor islands – hopefully, before they experience similar levels of degradation and decline.

Hawai'i must take proactive steps now to preserve our nearshore ecosystem systems for future generations. HB2599 supports that goal by ensuring DAR has a clear, science-guided directive and a transparent reporting structure that may benefit the public for decades to come. For these reasons, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** HB2599.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your commitment to Hawai'i's marine resources.



Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair
Committee on Water & Land

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
9:00AM Conference Room 411

RE: HB2599 - Aquatic Protection -Support

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Chamber of Sustainable Commerce, we write in support of HB2599, which strengthens Hawai'i's approach to coral reef protection by prioritizing ecosystem integrity and science-based management of aquatic resources. The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents more than 580 small businesses, sole proprietors and entrepreneurs across Hawai'i committed to a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity.

Coral reefs provide essential benefits to Hawai'i's economy and communities, including coastal protection, fisheries, recreation, tourism, and cultural connection. Many reefs—particularly around O'ahu—are already severely degraded due to land-use impacts, pollution, climate-driven warming, and intense recreational and fishing pressure. Without coordinated action, these impacts threaten reef health, food security, and the long-term viability of businesses that depend on healthy marine ecosystems.

HB 2599 takes a practical and forward-looking approach by requiring the Division of Aquatic Resources to manage aquatic life with the highest priority on protecting, restoring, and maintaining ecosystem integrity, using the best available science. The bill further directs the department to set clear goals to substantially improve coral reef resilience around O'ahu and to develop a transparent framework with annual reporting to the Legislature.

This approach supports long-term economic stability. Healthy reefs

Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards
Wainiha Country Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson
Niko Niko Family Dentistry
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia
Hawaii Taro Farm
Wailuku

Maile Meyer
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life Natural Foods
Hilo

Chamber of
Sustainable Commerce
808.445.7606
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI 96823

underpin Hawai'i's visitor economy, sustain local fisheries, protect coastal infrastructure, and reduce future public costs associated with erosion and climate impacts. Clear goals, interagency coordination, and regular reporting also provide accountability and predictability—key conditions for responsible economic planning and investment.

Thank you.

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:11:28 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jenny Yagodich | Malama Pūpūkea-Waimea | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

This bill takes an important step by prioritizing ecosystem health and resilience, using science and long-term planning to guide management. Strengthening reef resilience will help our nearshore environments better withstand climate change, pollution, and other stressors, while supporting natural recovery rather than continued decline.

Mahalo,

Jenny Yagodich, Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:13:32 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Sonja Kanani Enos | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Hashem and Vice Chair Morikawa,

I am a native Hawaiian and lineal descendant to the South Kona areas, spanning from Miloli'i to Kealahou. I currently work as the Director of Cultural and Community Affairs at Ho'ala Kealahou Nui, Inc.

I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT for HB 2599, which requires the Division of Aquatic Resources of the Department of Land and Natural Resources to manage the aquatic life and aquatic resources of the State with the highest priority given to protecting, restoring, and maintaining ecosystem integrity and use the best scientific data available. Requires the Division of Aquatic Resources of the Department of Land and Natural Resources to set goals to substantially increase coral-reef resilience around Oahu and develop a framework to meet those goals, with annual reports to the Legislature.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Me ke aloha nui,

Sonja Kanani Enos

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HB 2599
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

HOUSE COMMITTEE on WATER AND LAND
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 10, 2026

9:00AM

Room 411

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice Chair Morikawa, and members of House Committee on Water and Land,

My name is Keanu Binney-Medeiros. I am a lineal descendant of Kealakekua Bay and a hoāina of Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui Inc. I work as a research diver and digital media specialist, documenting reef health, species presence, and human-use impacts through underwater monitoring and community-based storytelling.

I submit this testimony in **strong support of HB2599**, which rightly prioritizes ecosystem integrity as the guiding principle for managing Hawai'i's aquatic life and resources, and requires the use of the best scientific data available to inform decision-making.

Hawai'i's coral reefs are living systems. When these ecosystems are weakened, the impacts ripple outward, affecting communities, livelihoods, and the health of our nearshore environments and reefs ecosystems. HB2599 acknowledges this reality by clearly directing the Division of Aquatic Resources to place the protection, restoration, and maintenance of ecosystem integrity above all other considerations. This approach aligns with Hawai'i's public trust responsibilities and ancestral management practices rooted in balance, and reciprocity for the benefit of community and future generations.

The bill's focus on substantially increasing coral reef resilience around Hawai'i.. Hawai'i's reefs face intense pressure from land-based pollution, climate impacts, and heavy human use. Setting clear goals and establishing a framework to meet them creates accountability, direction, and transparency. Annual reporting to the Legislature ensures progress is measured, shared, and adjusted as needed, rather than deferred or overlooked.

As someone who spends time in the water documenting reef conditions, I see firsthand that reef recovery does not happen by accident. It requires intentional management, strong leadership, and decisions grounded in and long-term thinking. HB2599 provides the structure needed to move beyond reactive management and toward proactive stewardship.

This bill recognizes that healthy ecosystems are the foundation that all uses depend on, Protecting Hawai'i's ecosystems integrity first, ensures that recreational use, cultural and subsistence practices, and can continue in a way that is sustainable and just.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to pass HB2599 and affirm that Hawai'i's reefs are not expendable, but essential. By leading with accountability, and ecosystem integrity, the State can take a meaningful step toward ensuring that future generations inherit reefs that are resilient, abundant, and alive.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide this testimony,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K Binney-Medeiros". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Keanu Binney-Medeiros

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:31:29 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen | Hoʻāla Kealakekua Nui, Inc. | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa and members of WAL Committee,

Hoʻāla Kealakekua Nui, Inc. (HKN) is a Community-based Conservation Management nonprofit that has an Adopt a Park agreement with Div. of State Parks. Although, AQ is prohibited within MLCDs and CBSFAs, HKN supports the amendment to Section 187A-2, the department shall:

1. Manage and administer the aquatic life and aquatic resources of the State, with the highest priority given to protecting, restoring, and maintaining ecosystem integrity, including by collaborating with other relevant agencies to restore and maintain good condition of the water that encompasses these ecosystems.

By adding this language, the State will truly be able to uphold its statutory obligation to ceded and submerged lands and the Native Hawaiians.

HKN urges this committee to pass HB2599 and recommend the next committee hear this measure.

Mahalo nui,

Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen, Executive Director

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 2:17:38 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Mike Nakachi | Moana Ohana | Support | In Person |

Comments:

Strong support of HB2599

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 2:56:54 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Douglas Perrine | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

For far too long, the DAR has prioritized extractive uses of our marine environment, even to the extent that excessive extraction damages the resource, hurting the extractive industry along with all other beneficiaries of the environment. HB2599 rightly prioritizes protection of the core resource upon which all users depend.

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:58:10 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mark Hixon | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha. As a professional marine biologist who has studied Hawaii's coral reefs since the 1970s, I believe this bill is a step in the right direction for saving our coral reefs ***if an only if*** the following sentence in the bill is truly implemented (emphasis of key words added): "The legislature further finds that ***immediate action*** is needed to protect and restore coral reefs around the State and especially around the island of Oahu." I fear that the details of this bill will allow DAR to continue to delay meaningful action. This is why I hope the committee will choose to amend this bill to include explicit benchmarks, similar to the approach taken by SB3201 (some of whose benchmarks are unrealistic). An example of much needed immediate action for Oahu is HB1750, which would begin replenishment of key fish populations that allow corals to flourish. Please, Hawaii's coral reefs are suffering terribly, especially around Oahu, and they will continue to degrade unless immediate remedial action is taken (especially with the ever-warming ocean causing increased coral bleaching). We cannot wait 3-4 years for the Holomua Marine Initiative to finally be implemented on Oahu. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:06:52 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Frederick Smith | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

My name is Frederick Smith, and I am a master’s student at UH Hilo focused on marine science and policy. I live in the Kealakekua ahupua‘a in South Kona, Hawai‘i Island. **I am writing in strong support of HB2599.**

Hawai‘i’s nearshore ecosystems are experiencing rapid decline driven by land-based pollution, climate-driven bleaching, sedimentation, invasive species, and cumulative overuse. Coral reefs provide essential cultural, ecological, and economic benefits, including supporting subsistence and nearshore fisheries, protecting shorelines from erosion and sea-level rise, maintaining biodiversity and habitat integrity, and sustaining recreation and tourism. Without coordinated, science-based management, many of Hawai‘i Islands’s reef ecosystems will continue to degrade or collapse in the coming decades.

HB2599 strengthens the Division of Aquatic Resources’ ability to address these challenges by:

1. Prioritizing ecosystem integrity in the management of Hawai‘i’s aquatic resources;
2. Requiring DAR to use the best available science to guide decisions; and
3. Establishing clear coral-reef resilience goals for O‘ahu, supported by a framework and annual progress reports to the Legislature.

This framework aligns with modern ecosystem-based management approaches and provides needed structure for long-term resilience planning.

Importantly, HB2599 does not impose new rules or restrictions on fishers and other ocean users, does not mandate closures or create enforcement requirements, and does not require appropriations this fiscal year. This bill simply clarifies priorities, improves coordination, and strengthens transparency, without creating unfunded mandates or regulatory burdens. Focusing DAR’s planning efforts first on O‘ahu makes sense, as its reefs are the most degraded, but this process could serve as a model for DAR to apply to all islands.

With climate-driven bleaching expected to increase in frequency and severity, Hawai‘i must take proactive steps now to preserve reef systems for future generations. HB2599 supports that goal by ensuring DAR has a clear, science-guided directive and a transparent reporting structure that

benefits both the Legislature and the public. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB2599**.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your commitment to Hawai'i's marine resources.

Frederick Smith

82-5996 Napo'opo'o Road

Captain Cook (Ka'awaloa), HI 96704

HB-2599

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:52:35 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Uilani Naipo | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this measure.