



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair
John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Vice Chair
Hawai'i Health Partners

Titimaea Ta'ase, JD
Secretary
Taase Law Office

Jonathan Ching
Kaiser Permanente

Tammy Ho
The Queen's Medical Center

Carissa Holley, MEd
Hale Makua Health Services

Joyce Lee-Ibarra, MS
JLI Consulting

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD
Medical-Legal Partnership
For Children in Hawai'i

JoAnn Tsark, MPH
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office

Danette Wong Tomiyasu, MBA
Retired, Hawai'i State Department of
Health

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Climate Change and Health
Working Group

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Immunization Coalition

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: April 15, 2026

To: Sen. Mike Gabbard, Chair
Sen. Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Re: Support for HCR 103, Affirming Support for the Expansion of Programs and
Projects That Increase Tree Canopy Coverage and Install Shade Trees in
Urban Areas to Mitigate the Effects of Urban Heat Islands Across the State

Hrg: April 17, 2026, 3:05 PM, Conference Room 224

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL)² are in **support of HCR 103**, which affirms support for the expansion of tree canopy programs to address urban heat islands across Hawai'i.

A Warming Environment

Hawai'i is experiencing hotter days and nights, with urban areas such as Honolulu, Kahului, and parts of the leeward coasts bearing the brunt of rising temperatures due to the urban heat island effect. Dense development, dark pavement, and limited vegetation cause these areas to heat up more during the day and cool down less at night, increasing the risk of heat stress, especially for kūpuna, keiki, outdoor workers, and low-income households without access to air conditioning. Expanding urban tree canopies is a proven, cost-effective method of cooling neighborhoods, improving health, and supporting climate resilience.³

This resolution advances the Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Plan 2030, which calls for policy, systems, and environmental changes to support active living and health equity.⁴ Objective 6 of the plan is to "increase by 50 miles the total miles of low-stress pedestrian infrastructure including, but not limited to, sidewalks and trails," and one of the identified strategies is to "develop policies to encourage shade tree planting, to increase canopy cover, on high-volume

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

³ ["Urban tree canopy has greater cooling effects in socially vulnerable communities in the US"](#), Weiqi Zhou, 2021.

⁴ [Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition \(PAN\) Plan 2030](#).



pedestrian corridors and trails.” By expanding shade tree programs in urban areas, this resolution operationalizes that objective.

Natural Cooling Solution

From a public health and built environment perspective, shaded, tree-lined streets and parks encourage physical activity by making it more comfortable to walk, bike, and play outside. People are more likely to choose active transportation to get to school, work, or transit when routes are pleasant, shaded, and perceived as safe, which contributes to lower rates of chronic disease and supports mental well-being.⁵

Vital Climate Infrastructure

By affirming strong support for urban tree canopy expansion, the legislature can send a clear signal that trees are not just amenities, but vital infrastructure to address a warming future in Hawai‘i. This resolution will support community-based organizations, schools, and neighborhood groups already working on the ground to plant and care for trees, while positioning the state to develop interagency partnerships to establish tree canopies in heat-stressed areas to bolster our efforts to strengthen climate regulation and heat mitigation.⁶

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to adopt this resolution. Expanding tree canopies and shade trees in urban areas is a practical way to reduce urban heat islands, protect public health, and build climate resilience for all residents of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris Coffield".

Kris Coffield
Policy and Advocacy Associate

⁵ [“Street-level neighborhood greenery linked to active transportation: A case study in Milwaukee and Green Bay”](#), WI, USA, Wei-Lun Tsai, Landscape and Urban Planning, Vol. 191, 2019.

⁶ [“The Effects of Historical Housing Policies on Resident Exposure to Intra-Urban Heat: A Study of 108 US Urban Areas”](#), Jeremy Hoffman, Climate, 2020.

HCR-103

Submitted on: 4/13/2026 5:48:54 PM

Testimony for AEN on 4/17/2026 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Over the past 55 years I have lived in Hawai'i I have been dismayed at the loss of so many trees. The trees are important not just for their beauty, but for their ability to absorb carbon dioxide and provide shade. Mahalo to the introducers of HCR103 for understanding the need and proposing legislation that is good for Hawai'i.