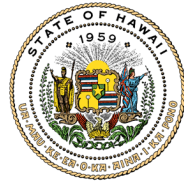


**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson  
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI A KIA'I MEAOLA  
1428 South King Street  
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Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2026**

**3:05 PM**

**CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 180  
USING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY TO EXPLORE  
AND PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO COLOCATE COMMUNITY-BASED  
RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATING PROJECTS WITH AGRICULTURAL  
RESERVOIRS AND IRRIGATION WATER INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Concurrent Resolution 180. This resolution urges the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (Department) to explore and pursue opportunities to colocate community-based renewable energy generating projects with agricultural reservoirs and irrigation water infrastructure. The Department respectfully offers comments.

The Department recognizes the potential benefits of renewable energy generating projects and supports efforts to move towards food and energy independence. Decisions regarding state resources should also account for costs, impacts on existing infrastructure and its functionality, long-term maintenance and operational requirements, and compliance with public procurement standards. The Department looks forward to participating in such opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



April 16, 2026

Attention:

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, III, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Written Testimony in Support of HCR 180/HR 170 “Urging the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to explore and pursue opportunities to co-locate community-based renewable energy generating projects with agricultural reservoirs and irrigation water infrastructure”

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Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, III, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment,

Since 2021, the Molokai Clean Energy Hui (“MCEH”), which includes Molokai residents, community leaders, practitioners, experts, and island organizations, developed the Molokai Community Energy Resilience Action Plan (CERAP). With support from technical and industry advisors and policy experts, CERAP’s innovative community planning process has been supported by the Hawai’i Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO), Hawaii State Energy Office (HSEO), Hawaii Natural Energy Initiative (HNEI), Maui County, Molokai’s elected officials, and others in the energy sector.

One of CERAP’s ten priority community identified projects is Floating Photovoltaics (FPV) at Kualapu’u Reservoir. MCEH has \$1.4M of federal funding from the Department of Energy, which expires in mid-September 2026 to progress FPV feasibility studies. HCR 180/HR 170 strongly supports the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity’s collaboration with these studies, including providing short-term access to the reservoir. Access is needed to perform hydrological, boundary and other surveys to progress FPV to a 30% engineering design.

MCEH is open to sharing survey results with other agencies and stakeholders, and Kualapu’u could be a pilot project under HCR/180/HR170 at no cost to the State.

MCEH recognizes energy as a resource with multi-tiered benefits that prioritizes Molokai community values and community voices first while respectfully managing water, land, and food security with energy solutions. The intersection of these resources and industries are crucial to Molokai as the community looks to achieve 100% clean, renewable energy and who also understands the importance of food security and



sovereignty, and respectful management of water, all which supports day-to-day life on Molokai and in times of disasters.

As the state of Hawai'i, including specifically Molokai experiences the following energy impacts:

- Electric rates for residential customers: Molokai residents face some of the highest in the state at more than 50¢/kwh pre-Iran war
- Post- Iran war gas prices on Molokai are over \$7/gallon
- Higher costs for water and/or agricultural owners: Water facilities can spend an estimated 20–40% of their operating budgets just on electricity for pumping while high water-energy costs make it increasingly difficult for local farmers to survive

HCR 180/HR 170 will support all priorities of Molokai community identified projects in CERAP, including Floating Photovoltaics (FPV) at Kualapu'u Reservoir:

Evaporative savings and water quality improvement:

- The panels floating on the surface of the reservoir will improve water quality for agriculture use and decrease the amount of water lost to evaporation by ~24.7 million gallons per year (~13% of the reservoir's current evaporation).
- This would decrease the need for pumping water into the reservoir, saving our islands' water resources, and saving electricity costs to run the pumps.

Avoided land disturbance:

- Placing the panels on the surface of the reservoir means less vacant land being disturbed for solar development, including agricultural land.
- Due to the design characteristics of FPV, 7MW can be produced with PV on 15 acres of the reservoir's surface area (only 17.3% of total reservoir surface area) vs 36 acres if the same sized solar system was land based.

Energy stability for Molokai ratepayers:

- The solar generated from panels on the reservoir, especially if community-owned, could provide a significant portion (~50%) of the island's electricity needs at a stable cost.

MCEH has been leading energy work on Molokai for the last 6 years and recognizes that energy intersects all things, including water and food systems directly managed by local farmers. We are open to amendments to this HCR 180/HR 170 that centers on community voices and decision making throughout the project.



For these reasons MCEH is in strong support of HCR 180/HR 170 and we urge the House Committee on Agriculture and Food System and House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection to support HCR 180/HR 170.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer K. Yoshimura". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer K. Yoshimura  
Energy Director, Sust'ainable Molokai  
Molokai Clean Energy Hui

April 16, 2026

To: Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Environment

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HR170 / HCR180 “Urging the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to explore and pursue opportunities to co-locate community-based renewable energy generating projects with agricultural reservoirs and irrigation water infrastructure”

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Aloha pumehana e nā members of the Committees on Agriculture and Environment,

Mahalo for the opportunity to write this **testimony of STRONG COMMUNITY SUPPORT for HR170 / HCR 180**. My name is Leilani Chow and I have had the honor of serving my Molokai community in the areas of energy efficiency and community-led energy planning for the past 16 years. Through my work in household energy audits, light bulb and appliance exchanges, coordination support for the Molokai Clean Energy Hui (“Hui” est. 2020), lead community facilitator for the Molokai Community Energy Resilience Action Plan (“CERAP” est. 2021), and in my current role as Ho’āhū Energy Cooperative Molokai’s Projects Coordinator, the Molokai community has trusted me to responsibly document and advocate for their needs and preferences when it comes to Molokai’s clean energy future.

The following community data and major decision points collected throughout the 5 year long CERAP planning process have been compiled here to exemplify the incredible dedication, time, and serious consideration Molokai has put into the selection and exploration of floating solar thus far. All CERAP projects, including FPV, have only made it to this point if they've received strong island-wide support. Projects are only able to receive strong community support through the CERAP process, designed by and for Molokai to prioritize well-informed place-based decision making.

**CERAP 1.0 (Jan 2022 - June 2023)**

- With support from HECO and the PUC, the Hui and UH Mānoa’s Hawaii Natural Energy Institute (HNEI) TA led by Mark Glick present a series of island-wide energy briefings on generation, storage, and grid configuration options that are technically feasible for Molokai.
- The Molokai **Community identifies Floating Solar as a generation technology in alignment with our values and goals** that we would like to explore further.
- Hui/community and HNEI work together to understand appropriate siting and sizing consideration alongside high-level cost tradeoffs for floating solar at the Kualapu’u Reservoir.
- CERAP’s FPV and other project concepts are shared island-wide, **floating solar at the Kualapu’u Reservoir receives 100% community support and makes it to the final CERAP portfolio** of projects after:
  - 2,800+ individual community conversations
  - 713 surveys collected
  - 30+ focus groups and workshops
  - 17 community events

**CERAP 2.1 (Jan 2024 - June 2025)**

- The Hui receives Technical Assistance from Dept of Energy's National Laboratory of the Rockies (NRL) and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) and continues working with HECO to understand grid preferability for Molokai.
- **FPV is validated from a technical grid preferability standpoint**, across Molokai community members compare high level project costs and bill impacts for different sizes and configurations of floating solar and ground-mounted solar.
- **Despite higher costs than ground-mounted solar, FPV continues to receive strong community support** and rises to the top 2 most preferred options for generating Central Molokai's energy (about 50% of Molokai's energy needs). This was confirmed through:
  - 512 community surveys
  - 10 focus groups and workshops
  - 19 community events

### **CERAP 2.2 (July 2025 - Sept 2026)**

- The Hui/community uses part of the remaining DOE funding to contract Noria Energy who quantifies and **confirms water related benefits and considerations for an FPV project** at the Kualapu'u Reservoir.
- Updated project costs, physical design layout, landowner relationship, water protection, environment/wildlife impacts, construction impacts, and timeline attributes for Molokai's top projects are shared with the community **from Jan-March 2026**.
- **The Community reaffirms FPV is a top priority energy project to move forward with** through:
  - 170 surveys collected
  - 11+ individual, focus group, and workshop discussions
  - 4+ community events
- (NOW) April - September 2026 the Molokai community has \$1.4 million remaining from DOE and is **seeking Department of Ag and Biosecurity permission for Right of Entry ASAP** to continue exploring the feasibility of floating solar at Kualapu'u.

After five years of rigorous planning and thousands of community conversations, Molokai has remained consistent in our prioritization of FPV as an energy solution that supports on island agriculture, protects our water, and improves our overall sustainability and wellbeing. We have the technical validation, community support, and \$1.4 million in federal funding ready to be deployed before it expires in September 2026.

**We humbly ask for your support of HR170 / HCR180 to provide the Dept of Ag and Biosecurity the encouragement and legislative backing needed to partner with the Molokai Clean Energy Hui in this exploration.**

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

*Leilani Chow*

Projects Coordinator, Ho'āhu Energy Cooperative Molokai  
Molokai Clean Energy Hui

## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR 180

Wednesday, April 16, 2026

To: Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Submitted by: Audrey Newman, Kalae, Molokai

**Re: Urging the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to explore and pursue opportunities to co-locate community-based renewable energy generating projects with agricultural reservoirs and irrigation water infrastructure**

Aloha and mahalo for this opportunity to express my **STRONG SUPPORT for HCR 180**. I am Audrey Newman and I have lived on Molokai for 24 years. I have been part of the Executive team supporting the Molokai Clean Energy Hui (MCEH or “Hui”) since it started in 2020. For more than 5 years, the Molokai community has worked together with vision and leadership to pursue the renewable energy (RE) future they want, starting with the 10 priority RE projects they identified in the Molokai Community Energy Resilience Action Plan or CERAP.

**This resolution will help the Dept of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DoAB) work with the Molokai community to gather important information on floating solar panels (FPV) on the Kualapu’u Reservoir.** Based on recent pre-feasibility studies shared through community workshops and surveys, **FPV is the community’s top priority large-scale RE project and could generate more than 50% of the island’s electricity needs.** The Hui has federal funding for the next phase of floating solar feasibility studies on the reservoir. These funds must be spent by September this year. We are eager to work with the State and use these studies to better understand FPV potential on Molokai. **This could be a pilot project under HCR180 at no cost to the Department and help explore the potential of floating solar technology for the State.**

Our Kualapu’u floating solar studies would address all the actions called for in HCR 180:

- Co-locating community-based renewable energy with Molokai’s most important agriculture reservoir and irrigation infrastructure, potentially making its operation more cost-effective.
- Ongoing close collaboration with Molokai farmers, homestead associations, the Molokai Irrigation System (MIS) Water Users Advisory Board, other Molokai community organizations, HECO, HSEO, PUC, Maui County, all of Molokai’s elected officials, US Department of Energy and many others.
- Preliminary studies have shown significant community and agricultural benefits from floating solar, including reduction in evaporation from the reservoir, improved water quality, reduced pumping costs, stable energy prices.
- Our proposed studies will assess the technical, economic, environmental and cultural feasibility of floating solar and provide critical information to support next step decisions by the community, the State, HECO and others.

The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity’s collaboration is critical to the next phase of this work, including providing short-term access to the reservoir. I humbly ask the Committees to pass this Resolution and urge the Department to support the exploration of floating solar on Kualapu’u Reservoir for Molokai and our State. Mahalo nui.

**HCR-180**

Submitted on: 4/13/2026 7:44:43 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

180 HCR URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY TO EXPLORE AND PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO COLOCATE COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATING PROJECTS WITH AGRICULTURAL RESERVOIRS AND IRRIGATION WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, COMMENT

WHAT HAPPENS TO COMMUNITIES WITHOUT RESERVOIRS? EXAMPLE WAI'ANAE