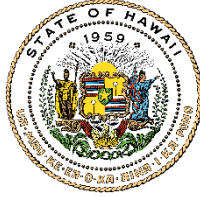


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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

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

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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
WATER AND LAND

Tuesday, March 31, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT Resolution 61
RELATING TO REFORESTATION

House Concurrent Resolution 61 calls on the Department of Land and Natural Resources to collaborate with its partners to boost investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this resolution.**

The Department promotes the development of policies and investments that expand forest cover in the state and reduce barriers to reforestation. Reforesting degraded public forest lands and planting trees on private lands will boost climate resilience and help protect Hawai'i from the impacts of disasters such as fire, flood, and landslides. Reforestation will also lead to diverse and productive landscapes that hold great potential to improve livelihoods, generate and sustain jobs, and support forest-based industries like local wood products, voluntary carbon markets, and other value-added processing. Increasing forest cover can also promote cultural use and biological diversity when native species are planted.

The Department supports investments in its existing production nurseries, which support reforestation efforts and require capacity, modern facilities, and upgrades in management efficiencies to successfully increase plant availability through seed collection, storage, and scaled propagation techniques. The state nurseries serve public and private landowner partners seeking to reforest lands.

The Department is eager to collaborate with private industry, conservation groups, and policy experts to develop incentives, programs, and funding arrangements, including the green fee, to cover the costs of reforestation and harness the many benefits that expanding forest cover will bring to the State. The Department supports these measures that aim to create conditions for expanding reforestation and increasing forest cover in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this important resolution.

The Hawai'i Reforestation Policy Hui



March 31, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature
House Committee on Water and Land

Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

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

On behalf of the Reforestation Policy Hui, a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to forest stewardship, ecological restoration, mālama 'āina, and sustainable land use in Hawai'i, we write in strong support of HCR61, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands.

Healthy forests are foundational to Hawai'i's environmental, cultural, and economic resilience. Forested watersheds protect freshwater resources, reduce erosion, mitigate wildfire risk, and provide critical habitat for native species. Reforestation efforts also play a key role in climate adaptation and carbon sequestration, while supporting local economies through forestry, agroforestry, and restoration-based jobs.

Achieving meaningful reforestation at scale requires a coordinated and sustained investment in multiple areas. Expanding nursery capacity ensures the availability of high-quality, locally appropriate plant material. Strengthening workforce development creates pathways for local communities to participate in restoration efforts. Additionally, policies and incentives that support landowners—both public and private—are essential to accelerating reforestation across the state.

HCR61 appropriately recognizes that reforestation is not a single program, but a comprehensive effort requiring collaboration across agencies, communities, and sectors. By prioritizing investment in these key areas, Hawai'i can restore degraded landscapes, enhance ecosystem services, and build long-term resilience for future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

HCR-61

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 7:25:34 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

61 HCR URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

March 31, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature
House Committee on Water and Land

Re: Testimony in Support for HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

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

My name is Hanna Lesiak, and I am writing in strong support of HCR 61, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands.

I submit this testimony as an individual and as a member of the Care for 'Āina Now Coalition, a network committed to protecting and restoring Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources. While this measure focuses on forests, it is important to recognize that Hawai'i's environment functions as an interconnected system. The health of our forests directly impacts our watersheds, nearshore reefs, fisheries, and ultimately the well-being of our communities.

Reforestation is one of the most effective strategies we have to strengthen climate resilience, protect freshwater resources, and reduce erosion and sediment runoff that degrades coral reefs. Investing in upland restoration is, in many ways, an investment in the long-term health of our oceans and coastal ecosystems.

To achieve meaningful and scalable reforestation outcomes, a comprehensive approach is needed. Expanding nursery capacity is critical to ensuring a reliable supply of native and climate-appropriate plant materials. At the same time, building a skilled and locally rooted workforce creates economic opportunities while empowering communities to participate in long-term stewardship of these lands. Strategic policies and incentives are also necessary to support both public and private landowners in undertaking restoration efforts.

HCR 61 appropriately recognizes that reforestation is not a single initiative, but a coordinated, statewide effort that requires sustained investment and collaboration across sectors. By strengthening these foundational elements, Hawai'i can restore degraded landscapes, enhance ecosystem services, and build resilience in the face of increasing environmental pressures.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

Hanna Lesiak

March 30, 2026

Hawaii State House of Representatives
House Committee on Water & Land
House Committee on Public Safety
Hearing on HCR 61
Position: Support

I am lifelong resident of Nu‘uanu and a master’s student in anthropology at Columbia University, where my research focuses on conservation education in Hawai‘i. Through my fieldwork, I have conducted primary research on Native Hawaiian land snails and their ecological significance within forest ecosystems. These species, often overlooked, an essential role in nutrient cycling and are deeply interconnected with forest health, watershed function, and the broader concept of ‘āina as a living, reciprocal system. From this perspective, I strongly support this resolution recognizing Hawai‘i’s forests as foundational to the State’s water supply, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and climate resilience.

Research has shown that the decline of native land snails is closely tied to the degradation of Hawai‘i’s forests. As invasive species, habitat loss, and ungulate damage accelerate forest decline, we are not only losing biodiversity but also disrupting the ecological processes that sustain healthy watersheds. These impacts are not abstract, they affect water security, reef health, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about the land. Conservation education programs across Hawai‘i are working to address this gap, but they depend on strong policy signals that prioritize forest restoration as a public good.

This resolution is especially important because it recognizes that reforestation is not just an environmental issue, but a cultural, economic, and educational one. Healthy forests support place-based learning, strengthen community stewardship, and create opportunities for sustainable forest economies rooted in species like koa, ‘iliahi, maile, and ‘ōhi‘a lehua. Restoring forests also restores relationships: to place, to culture, and to future generations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this resolution. Investing in forest restoration is an investment in Hawai‘i’s ecological integrity, cultural continuity, and long-term resilience. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Charla Teves
Honolulu, Hawaii

HCR-61

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 3:15:57 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jocelyn Herbert	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

My name is Jocelyn Herbert. I am a resident of Kailua-Kona on Hawai'i Island and participate in the statewide Reforestation Investment Hui.

Native reforestation and forest restoration are foundational strategies for achieving the state's goals in conservation, climate resilience, economic diversification, and cultural preservation.

Healthy forests are the foundation of Hawai'i's environmental, cultural, and economic well-being. They safeguard our watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, stabilize soils, and shelter endangered species. They are also vital carbon sinks that help the state meet its climate goals. Beyond their ecological role, forests are woven deeply into Native Hawaiian culture and provide long-term economic opportunities through the restoration and sustainable harvesting of high-value native species such as koa, 'iliahi, maile, and māmakī.

Yet, after decades of degradation, Hawai'i's forests face significant ecological, cultural, and economic challenges that demand renewed, coordinated investment. This resolution describes the multiple values and benefits that restored forests and sustainable forestry can provide to Hawai'i, and encourages the State to work with partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawaii's public and private lands.

I urge the committee to pass this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,
Jocelyn Herbert

Melissa Pavlicek
1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530
Honolulu, Hawaii 96913

Testimony in Support of HCR61: URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

DATE: 03-31-26 10:00AM

ROOM: Room 411

COMMITTEE: House Committee on Water & Land

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

I am an attorney and small business owner in Hawai'i. Although I reside only four miles from urban downtown Honolulu, a forest-covered mountainside and conservation area provides my community with an abundance of wildlife, including indigenous and endangered flora and fauna.

I also have the privilege of mentoring two undergraduate students, one in the Natural Resource and Environmental Management Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and another at Chaminade University of Honolulu. Through this mentorship, we are working together to support environmental policy development, natural resource protection and restoration, and the application of sound environmental principles in real-world decision-making. I am writing in strong support of this resolution.

In our work together, forests consistently emerge as central to the long-term well-being of Hawai'i's people. Healthy forests are not just landscapes, they are living infrastructure that sustain our watersheds, recharge our aquifers, and ensure a reliable supply of fresh water. As I guide these students in understanding the intersection of policy, science, and community impact, it becomes clear that protecting and restoring forests is one of the most important investments we can make for future generations.

This collaboration is not theoretical. It is grounded in preparing the next generation of leaders to think critically about land use, climate resilience, and resource management in Hawai'i. By engaging students in policy discussions like this resolution, we are building capacity for informed stewardship and reinforcing the idea that long-term sustainability requires both strong policy frameworks and committed individuals. The health of our forests, and by extension our watersheds, will define the quality of life for our communities, our economy, and our keiki.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this resolution. It reflects the kind of forward-thinking, intergenerational approach that my students and I strive to advance, one that recognizes forests as essential to the enduring health and prosperity of Hawai'i. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony on HCR61

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

DATE: 03/31/2026 10:00AM

ROOM: Room 411

COMMITTEE: House Committee on Water & Land

Dear **chair Hashem**, vice chair Morikawa, and members of the committee,

Pierce Young **supports** this measure to encourage reforestation efforts by the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

As a resident of Kakaako and a lifelong Hawai'i local who values green spaces, I recognize the importance of healthy forests in urban and rural environments. Reforestation not only preserves natural beauty but also contributes to community well-being, provides recreational opportunities, and enhances the quality of life for residents and their pets.

This measure aligns with my personal experience and belief that green spaces are essential in growing cities, supporting both environmental sustainability and public enjoyment. Reforestation can help address challenges such as erosion, habitat loss, and climate resilience, all of which are increasingly relevant as urban areas expand.

I respectfully encourage the Legislature to ensure that reforestation initiatives are implemented in ways that maximize community access and involvement, and that they consider the needs of residents and pet owners who rely on these spaces for recreation and connection to nature.

If you have any questions or concerns, we are available for comment at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Pierce Young

Testimony in Support for HCR 61: Urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investments in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands

Aloha e Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Water & Land Committee,

My name is Maka Gibson, I live in Kāneʻohe, and I am writing in **strong support of HCR 61**.

This resolution reflects a fundamental truth in Hawai'i: when we care for our forests, our forests care for us. Our native forests are essential to the health of our wai, our reefs, our communities, and our future. They are not just landscapes—they are living systems that sustain life from mauka to makai, and they carry deep cultural significance and responsibility.

At a time when Hawai'i is beginning to generate new, dedicated public funding through the Green Fee, HCR 61 provides timely and important direction. The Green Fee Advisory Council explicitly identified reforestation and watershed restoration as top priorities, recommending significant investments in environmental stewardship projects rooted in ahupua'a-scale restoration. This resolution helps ensure we are ready to deploy those funds effectively, by strengthening the underlying systems needed to scale this work, especially nursery capacity, seed supply, workforce development, and landowner support.

If we are serious about stewarding these new public resources with integrity, we must invest not only in planting trees, but in building the long-term infrastructure and partnerships that make restoration possible. HCR 61 recognizes that reforestation is not a one-time activity—it is a generational commitment that requires coordination across agencies, communities, practitioners, and landowners.

Importantly, this measure also helps address real barriers faced by those who want to mālama ʻāina—whether it is the cost of fencing and invasive species control, limited access to native seedlings, or a lack of technical and financial support. By calling for expanded incentives, partnerships, and capacity, HCR 61 opens the door for more communities—especially local and ʻike-based practitioners—to participate in and lead this work.

This is also an opportunity to grow a reforestation economy in Hawai'i—one that supports local jobs, strengthens agricultural resilience, and uplifts ʻike kūpuna alongside modern science. Investing in nursery systems, seed networks, and workforce pathways creates not only environmental benefits, but meaningful economic opportunity grounded in place.

At its core, HCR 61 is about kuleana. It is about recognizing that we have a responsibility to restore what has been degraded, to care for the resources that sustain us, and to leave Hawai'i better for the next generation. By aligning policy, funding, and community capacity, this resolution helps move us toward a future where our forests are once again abundant, our watersheds are protected, and our communities are resilient.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your strong support for HCR 61. Mahalo for your leadership and commitment to caring for our ʻāina and our future.

**Testimony in Support of [HCR61](#)
House Committee on Water and Land
Position: Support**

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

My name is Lauren Buck, and I am submitting written testimony in strong support of HCR61, which would urge the Department of Land and Natural Resources to collaborate with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands. I am a student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa majoring in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (NREM) with a specialization in coastal watershed management, and I have a strong interest in preserving and protecting our natural resources here in Hawai'i.

Forests play an essential role in protecting and enhancing the local ecosystem. They contribute to improving watershed functions, providing habitats for native species, and supporting the community and recreational activities of Hawai'i's residents. As a powerful tool against climate change, healthy forests are essential in reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide by trapping greenhouse gasses during the process of photosynthesis. Forested watersheds also protect freshwater resources by reducing erosion and wildfire risks.

For these benefits to take place, sustainable forestry and meaningful reforestation needs to be ran with a holistic approach across multiple areas. Expanding the nursery capacity ensures that there is more land availability for native plant species. Improving workforce development can create a pathway for communities to participate in restoration efforts. Accessibility to students to learn and assist in sustainable forestry practices would become more available. HCR61 would also support policies that aid landowners in implementing reforestation practices across their private and public lands. This collaboration across communities and agencies would see restoration of degraded land accelerated.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to pass HCR61 and ensure Hawai'i's commitment to protecting its natural resources and support agencies that prioritize sustainable practices. This bill will ensure that these ecosystems and their services are available for future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership on this important issue.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,
Lauren Buck
O'ahu
96826