

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
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 Committees on
WATER AND LAND**

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

**In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 103
and
HOUSE RESOLUTION 95
RELATING TO URBAN TREE CANOPY**

House Concurrent Resolution 103 and House Resolution 95 affirm support for expanding programs and projects that increase tree canopy coverage and plant shade trees in urban areas to combat the effects of urban heat islands statewide. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports these resolutions.**

Urban heat is a growing issue, caused by large areas of pavement, roads, concrete buildings, and other surfaces that absorb heat. It affects kūpuna, keiki, and communities with limited shade. Hawai'i is experiencing more frequent extreme heat waves and heavy rain events, which are putting more pressure on our infrastructure.

Urban trees are a proven, cost-effective way to address these challenges. Tree canopies lower temperatures, improve air quality, and boost public health. Trees and healthy soils also play a vital role in stormwater management—intercepting and slowing rainfall, increasing infiltration, and reducing runoff that can overwhelm drainage systems and carry pollutants into nearshore waters. These benefits are especially crucial where mauka conditions directly impact reefs, fisheries, and coastal resources.

The state has already shown leadership in this area. Department programs, including the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program and its pilot projects, Shade Trees for Schools and Community Coconut, offer successful models for coordinated investment, community partnerships, and long-term care of urban forests. Growing these efforts is vital to filling gaps in tree canopy coverage.

This work reflects Hawai'i's traditional ahupua'a system, which managed water and resources from mauka to makai through living systems that slowed, absorbed, and filtered rainfall. Reinvesting in tree canopies and healthy soils is a modern application of these principles.

The Department advocates for coordinated statewide efforts to evaluate heat and canopy conditions, identify priority areas, and incorporate tree planting and green infrastructure into planning and capital improvement projects.

We also stress the importance of "right tree, right place, right care" to ensure long-term benefits and reduce risks. Recognizing trees and healthy soils as infrastructure means planning, funding, and maintaining them alongside traditional stormwater systems.

Recent storms have shown that landscapes covered with impermeable surfaces and bare ground increase flooding and water quality problems. Green infrastructure can lessen these risks. Expanding tree canopy is not only a way to reduce heat but also a vital part of climate resilience.

The Department is prepared to collaborate with partners to promote these initiatives across the state.

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



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: March 29, 2026

To: Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Water and Land

Re: Support for HCR 103/HR 95, 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: March 31, 2026, 10:00 AM, Conference Room 411

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL)² are in **support of HCR 103/HR 95**, 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

SCR 129/SR 121 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.

HR-95

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 8:19:46 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Maydan	Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Advisory Council	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony of the Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Advisory Council
In Strong Support of House Concurrent Resolution 103 and House Resolution 95**

Relating to Urban Tree Canopy and Heat Island Mitigation

Chair and Members of the Agriculture and Environment Committee:

The Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Advisory Council strongly supports House Concurrent Resolution 103 and House Resolution 95, which affirm the importance of expanding tree canopy and shade in urban areas to address increasing heat across Hawai‘i.

The Kaulunani Advisory Council acts in an advisory capacity to the Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Program in the Division of Forestry and Wildlife of the DLNR. The Council provides recommendations, direction, and strategic guidance for an array of community forestry initiatives, including reviewing grant applications, recommending approval for community projects, and advising on educational and outreach efforts.

The Council is composed of a diverse group of professionals representing a range of sectors and experience across all counties of Hawai‘i. Members bring expertise in planning, arboriculture, education, community development, conservation, and public land management, and include representation from county and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community-based initiatives across the islands of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, Maui, and Kaua‘i. This diversity ensures that urban forestry strategies are informed by local knowledge and responsive to the unique needs of communities statewide.

From this vantage point, the Council sees firsthand the increasing demand for community-driven tree planting, education, and stewardship initiatives. Through Kaulunani’s grant programs and partnerships, communities across Hawai‘i from schools and neighborhood groups to nonprofit organizations are actively working to plant, care for, and expand urban tree canopy. We also see that much more remains to be done by state and county agencies to institutionalize, expand, and enhance tree canopy and tree care in urban spaces. We urge agencies to see and treat trees as living infrastructure, not just

‘beautification’. As with other types of infrastructure, sustained investment in appropriate maintenance is critical.

These efforts are increasingly important as urban heat intensifies. Many communities, particularly those with limited canopy, experience higher temperatures due to the prevalence of heat-absorbing surfaces such as roads and rooftops. Planting and expanding tree canopy is one of the most immediate and effective ways to provide shade, reduce heat exposure, minimize runoff and improve quality of life at the neighborhood scale.

At the same time, the Council recognizes that the benefits of trees extend well beyond heat mitigation. Trees and healthy soils support water absorption, reduce runoff, and help protect downstream coastal resources. In short, trees are long-term community assets that compound value year after year.

S.R. 121 and S.C.R. 129 reinforce the importance of coordinated, statewide action. From the Council’s perspective, advancing these resolutions will help strengthen community-based programs, support partnerships between and among agencies, and expand access to the many benefits of urban trees.

The Kaulunani Advisory Council stands ready to continue providing guidance and support to advance urban and community forestry initiatives across Hawai‘i.

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

Jennifer Maydan, Chair

(on behalf of the Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Advisory Council)

HR-95

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 8:20:57 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noa Lincoln	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as a Native Hawaiian, a lifelong resident of Hawaii, and a subject matter expert with degrees in Environmental Engineering and Terrestrial Biogeochemistry. Among the best strategies for the mitigation and adaptation of rising temperatures is planting trees, particularly in the areas where people live. I strongly support this bill.