



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Culture & Arts  
Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Charles “Chip” Fletcher, PhD  
Dean, School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

and

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and

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HCR 106/HR 98 – ENDORSING WAIKIKI AS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE.

Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) and the Climate Resilience Collaborative (CRC) strongly support the intent of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 106 and House Resolution (HR) 98, which recognize Waikīkī as a World Surfing Reserve.

Waikīkī is not only an iconic cultural and recreational landscape, but also a cornerstone of Hawai'i's visitor economy. Its world-renowned surf breaks, beaches, and coastal ecosystems are intrinsically linked to the economic vitality of the region. The health of these natural resources directly underpins the livelihoods of local businesses, supports employment, and sustains the broader economic resilience of the State. As such, there is a clear and compelling social, cultural and economic rationale for protecting and stewarding the environmental systems that make Waikīkī both unique and globally significant.

Designation as a World Surfing Reserve would formally acknowledge Waikīkī's exceptional environmental, cultural, and recreational value while elevating public awareness of the growing threats facing its coastal resources. These include coastal erosion, sea level rise, increased storm impacts, and ongoing pressures from urban development and heavy use. Recognizing Waikīkī through this designation provides an important platform to highlight these challenges and to promote proactive, science-informed management strategies. Our understanding is that designation as a Reserve does not necessarily trigger new environmental or commercial regulations but instead requires the formation of a stewardship committee and subsequent community-based management plan.

Equally important, this recognition would help strengthen and formalize community-based stewardship. It offers a mechanism to enhance collaboration among local stakeholders, practitioners, cultural leaders, and resource managers, fostering a shared commitment to protecting Waikīkī's natural and cultural heritage. By aligning conservation efforts with community values and local knowledge, this initiative can support more effective, inclusive, and adaptive management approaches.

In summary, HCR 106 and HR 98 represent a meaningful step toward safeguarding the environmental integrity, cultural significance, and economic sustainability of Waikīkī for future generations. Hawai'i Sea Grant and the CRC respectfully urge your support for these resolutions.

Hawai'i Sea Grant's mission is to provide integrated research, extension, and education activities that increase understanding and use of ocean and coastal resources of the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands and support the informed personal, policy, and management decisions that are integral to realizing this vision. Hawai'i Sea Grant is part of a national network of 34 university-based programs associated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that promote better understanding, conservation, and use of coastal resources.

CRC is a multi-investigator research project at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa focused on sea level rise adaptation and climate resilience. CRC is updating coastal models that project the impacts of sea level rise.



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House Committee on  
Culture and Arts

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 10:00am

By  
Rick Egged, President  
Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association

HCR106/HR98 – ENDORSING WAIKIKI AS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE.

Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong and Members of the Committee:

**The Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association (WBSIDA) supports House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 106 and House Resolution (HR) 98, which recognize Waikiki as a World Surfing Reserve.**

Waikiki's world-renowned surf breaks and coastal ecosystems are foundational to both its cultural significance and economic vitality, demonstrating the clear connection between environmental health and long-term economic resilience. Protecting these natural resources is essential to sustaining the livelihoods, visitor industry, and community identity that depend on them. Designation as a World Surfing Reserve would formally acknowledge Waikiki's exceptional environmental, cultural, and recreational value while elevating public awareness of the growing threats facing its coastal resources.

This designation would elevate awareness of the increasing threats to Waikiki's coastal environment, while providing a framework to strengthen community-based stewardship. Designation as a World Surfing Reserve does not automatically trigger new environmental or commercial regulations but instead facilitates the formation of a stewardship committee and subsequent community-based management plan. Recognizing Waikiki as a World Surfing Reserve can help align stakeholders, support informed management, and advance a shared vision for protecting these vital natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Equally important, this recognition would help strengthen and formalize community-based stewardship. It offers a mechanism to enhance collaboration among local stakeholders, practitioners, cultural leaders, and resource managers, fostering a shared commitment to protecting Waikiki's natural and cultural heritage. By aligning conservation efforts with community values and local knowledge, this initiative can support more effective, inclusive, and adaptive management approaches. The WBSIDA supports the intent of HCR106 and HR98 and looks forward to continued discussion on the details.