

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION

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GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. No. 2372, S.D.2, Relating to Trees

BEFORE THE:

House Committee on Water & Land

DATE: Tuesday, March 17, 2026

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 411

Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding S.B. 2372, S.D.2, for your consideration.

Section 1 of S.B. 2372, S.D.2, adds five new sections to chapter 58, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), establishing a new exceptional tree program. Under new section 58-A, HRS, the definition of "exceptional tree" is redefined to mean a tree, stand or grove of trees that has been designated by a county arborist advisory committee pursuant to new section 58-B, HRS. The bill also establishes a new category of "significant trees" for education and outreach purposes. Significant trees may later become designated as exceptional trees.

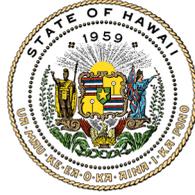
Section 2 of S.B. 2372, S.D.2, repeals the definition of "exceptional trees" as previously established under section 58-3, HRS. Section 3 of the bill then amends the exceptional trees income tax deduction under section 235-19(d), HRS, to incorporate by reference the new "exceptional tree" definition in section 58-A, HRS.

The bill has a defective effective date of July 1, 2050. Upon its approval, DOTAX can administer section 3 of the bill as drafted.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Tuesday, March 17, 2026
9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2372, SENATE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO TREES

Senate Bill 2372, Senate Draft 2 establishes base selection criteria for exceptional trees; establishes the significant tree designation, selection criteria, and related processes; establishes the State Arborist Advisory Committee within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) for administrative purposes; requires County Arborist Advisory Committees to have at least six members, adopt new exceptional tree selection criteria, and designate significant trees; and directs the Department and the University of Hawai'i to cooperate with State and County Arborist Advisory Committees to carry out the Exceptional Trees Program. **The Department supports this bill and offers the following comments.**

From a water and land management perspective, preserving large canopy trees is a highly cost-effective natural infrastructure strategy. Mature trees intercept rainfall, stabilize soils, reduce runoff, and moderate temperatures, directly supporting watershed health and community resilience. From a cultural and community standpoint, exceptional trees serve as living landmarks that connect residents to history and place.

Across the state, mature urban trees are steadily declining due to development pressures, aging infrastructure, and inconsistent protections. Once lost, their benefits take decades, if not a century, to replace, increasing long-term environmental and public health costs.

Through the Division of Forestry and Wildlife's Urban and Community Forestry Program, Kaulunani, the Department is already advancing the intent of this bill by supporting community tree stewardship, technical assistance, arborist training, county partnerships, and canopy protection efforts statewide. These programs demonstrate both strong public demand for tree conservation and the need for consistent statewide coordination.

This bill expands this foundation by creating a State Arborist Advisory Committee within the Department to offer technical guidance, support county programs, and ensure that exceptional and significant trees are consistently identified, protected, and managed across Hawai'i.

Successful implementation will require dedicated staff and modest operational resources. A funded position, managed through the existing Kaulunani program, to coordinate the advisory committee, support counties, and integrate scientific, cultural, and community expertise will allow the State to proactively protect significant trees before they are lost—preventing much higher long-term costs related to heat impacts, flooding, infrastructure damage, and canopy replacement. The Department could also evaluate existing exceptional trees and determine the best way to promote their health and minimize their risk to people and infrastructure.

The Department stands ready to assist continued development of this measure, including working out the intricacies of how a State Arborist Advisory Committee would be implemented.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



John Pelletier, Chair
Raymond Kirchner
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Vacant
Roselyn Molina

County of Hawai'i KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

Aupuni Center • 101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
(808) 961-8288 • Fax (808) 961-8742

March 16, 2026

Chair Mark J. Hashem
Vice Chair Dee Morikawa
House Committee on Water & Land

RE: Strong Support for S.B. 2372 SD2, Relating to Trees

DATE: Tuesday, March 17, 2026
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
LOCATION: State Capitol, Conference Room 411
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the House Committee on Water & Land:

The Kona Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee respectfully submits this written testimony in **strong support of S.B. 2372 SD2, Relating to Trees.**

This measure strengthens Hawai'i's ability to identify, preserve, and steward exceptional and significant trees by establishing baseline selection criteria and supporting a more coordinated implementation framework. The Committee supports this bill's efforts to improve consistency in the Exceptional Trees Program and to reinforce collaboration among the State, counties, and qualified advisory bodies.

Article XI of the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i calls for the conservation and protection of Hawai'i's natural beauty and resources for present and future generations. In the same spirit, the first Guiding Principle of the Kona CDP is to protect Kona's natural resources. Trees are among the most visible, valuable, and irreplaceable of those resources.

The Legislature's passage of the Exceptional Tree Act in 1974 recognized that exceptional trees on both public and private lands deserve protection from improper trimming, damage, and unnecessary removal. S.B. 2372, SD2 builds upon that legacy by providing clearer standards and stronger support for the ongoing care and preservation of these important community assets.

This bill is consistent with the Environmental Resources goals, policies, and actions of the Kona CDP. As Chapter 4.3.2 explains, Kona's growing ecological awareness must be matched by informed policies that protect and manage our diverse natural resources.

Exceptional and significant trees advance that vision. They enhance open spaces, serve as cultural and visual landmarks, strengthen community character, and provide important environmental benefits such as shade, urban canopy protection, groundwater filtration, and support for healthy rainfall patterns. Their preservation also aligns with Kona CDP Policy LU-2.5 (Village Design Guidelines), which calls for incorporating natural and cultural features into the community.

Recognizing and protecting exceptional trees reflects our community's commitment to safeguarding one of Kona's most valuable natural resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Pelletier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Pelletier, Chair
Kona Community Development Plan Action Committee

JH

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2026-03-12 KCDP AC Letter - SB2372 SD2

Final Audit Report

2026-03-17

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SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 5:37:14 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition and Climate Protectors Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT!

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 12:30:09 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Maute	The Outdoor Circle	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

[SB2372 SD2](#) Hawai‘i’s Exceptional Tree law has protected some of the state’s most important trees for over fifty years. This bill updates this program using modern urban forestry science and strengthens the framework for protecting these irreplaceable living landmarks. Therefore I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2372.

Key reasons to support the bill include:

• **Modernizes Hawai‘i’s Exceptional Tree program**

The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles.

• **Protects trees that anchor Hawai‘i’s landscapes and community character**

Exceptional trees are living landmarks that contribute to Hawai‘i’s sense of place and cultural identity.

• **Creates a pathway to recognize significant trees earlier**

SB2372 SD2 establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as “exceptional,” helping protect them before they are lost.

• **Strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection**

The bill establishes a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state.

• **Supports long-term urban forest stewardship**

Better coordination and updated criteria will help ensure Hawai‘i’s urban forests remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

• **Has strong support from the agencies responsible for implementation**

The bill is supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals.

For these reasons, The Outdoor Circle **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2372 SD2** and respectfully urges legislators to **advance SB2372 SD2**.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 1:06:25 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine West Dale	The Outdoor Circle	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

3. [SB2372 SD2](#) Hawai‘i’s Exceptional Tree law has protected some of the state’s most important trees for over fifty years. This bill updates this program using modern urban forestry science and strengthens the framework for protecting these irreplaceable living landmarks. We **STRONGLY SUPPORT** SB2372.

Key reasons to support the bill include:

• **Modernizes Hawai‘i’s Exceptional Tree program**

The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles.

• **Protects trees that anchor Hawai‘i’s landscapes and community character**

Exceptional trees are living landmarks that contribute to Hawai‘i’s sense of place and cultural identity.

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SB2372 SD2 establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as “exceptional,” helping protect them before they are lost.

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The bill establishes a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state.

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Better coordination and updated criteria will help ensure Hawai'i's urban forests remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

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The bill is supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals.

For these reasons, The Outdoor Circle **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2372 SD2** and respectfully urges legislators to **advance SB2372 SD2**.



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Keeping Hawai'i clean,
green and beautiful
since 1912

March 15th, 2026

RE: Strong Support for SB2372 SD2 Relating to Trees

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa and Committee Members,

Founded in 1912, The Outdoor Circle was instrumental in the creation of the Exceptional Trees Act in 1975 and continues to work closely with arborists and community stakeholders statewide on all tree-related matters.

Over the past five decades, urban forestry science and exceptional tree programs have advanced significantly. SB2372 SD2 positions Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree program among leading modern urban forestry best practices for identifying, designating, and preserving exceptional trees. The bill incorporates updated selection criteria developed through empirical research and informed by both local and international experts, ensuring the program reflects current urban forestry science and best practices.

Exceptional trees are living anchors of Hawai'i's cultural landscapes and community character. Protecting these irreplaceable natural assets is not simply an environmental priority. It is essential to preserving the qualities that define Hawai'i for residents and visitors alike.

SB2372 SD2 also establishes a new secondary designation for *significant trees*—trees that meet defined criteria but do not rise to the level of exceptional designation. This tiered approach creates a pipeline for future exceptional tree candidates while fostering public awareness, stewardship and long-term canopy resilience.

In addition, the bill formally creates a State Arborist Advisory Committee to support and coordinate with the four existing county Arborist Advisory Committees. A statewide advisory structure will promote consistency across counties, reduce fragmentation, and support more strategic long-term canopy planning. SB2372 SD2 modernizes the Exceptional Tree program without creating new regulatory obligations, tax impacts, or changes to county authority. The changes in SB2372 SD2 are technical and do not alter the core policy provisions of the bill.

SB2372 SD2 represents a thoughtful and necessary evolution of Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree program, positioning the state to better protect its most distinguished trees for future generations. The Outdoor Circle respectfully urges passage of this measure.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

Winston Welch, Executive Director

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:23:57 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gordon Aoyagi	Manoa Outdoor Circle	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2372 SD2

Manoa Outdoor Circle strongly supports SB 2372 SD2. Hawaii's Exceptional Tree program has protected some of the state's most important trees over 50 years. SB2372 updates and modernizes Hawaii's exceptional tree program by using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles; protects trees that anchor Hawaii's landscapes and community character; creates a pathway to recognize significant and potential exceptional trees for the future; strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection; helps ensure Hawaii's urban forest remain healthy and resilient for future generations; and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals gaining the support of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Manoa Outdoor Circle strongly supports SB2372 SD2 and urges legislators to advance SB2372 SB2.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 12:01:41 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharon McKellar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Modernizes Hawai‘i’s Exceptional Tree program

The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles.

• Protects trees that anchor Hawai‘i’s landscapes and community character

Exceptional trees are living landmarks that contribute to Hawai‘i’s sense of place and cultural identity.

• Creates a pathway to recognize significant trees earlier

SB2372 SD2 establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as “exceptional,” helping protect them before they are lost.

• Strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection

The bill establishes a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state.

• Supports long-term urban forest stewardship

Better coordination and updated criteria will help ensure Hawai‘i’s urban forests remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

- **Has strong support from the agencies responsible for implementation**

The bill is supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals.

For these reasons, I **STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2372 SD2** and respectfully urge legislators to **advance SB2372 SD2**.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 12:56:26 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2372 SD2, which will give a significant update to our Exceptional Trees laws and programs related to it. The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles. It also establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as “exceptional,” helping protect them before they are lost. And it strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection by establishing a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state. Our Exceptional Tree program is so important to maintaining our sense of place and cultural identity and natural beauty—please help strengthen and modernize it!

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 1:29:54 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
judy folk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I see that the bill gives Hawaii residents and Hawaii's natural beauty a chance to keep up to date with new times and new actions within our living areas and within the natural beauty of existing trees. Please DO recognize and accept the passing of this Exceptional Trees bill. thank you

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 1:44:48 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sidney Lynch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Yes, support this bill. Will provide path to identify exceptional trees sooner.

The DLNR supports this bill. Modernizes the existing program.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 2:52:15 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kathy Shimata & I live in Honolulu.

I urge you to support modernization of Hawaii's Exceptional Tree law. Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree law has protected some of the state's most important trees for over fifty years. This bill updates this program using modern urban forestry science and strengthens the framework for protecting these irreplaceable living landmarks.

Let's malama our aina by supporting SB2372.

Mahalo,

Kathy Shimata

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:16:42 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
P Hauoli'ipo Wright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree law has protected some of the state's most important trees for over fifty years. This bill updates this program using modern urban forestry science and strengthens the framework for protecting these irreplaceable living landmarks. I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2372.

Key reasons to support the bill include:

• Modernizes Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree program

The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles.

• Protects trees that anchor Hawai'i's landscapes and community character

Exceptional trees are living landmarks that contribute to Hawai'i's sense of place and cultural identity.

• Creates a pathway to recognize significant trees earlier

SB2372 SD2 establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as "exceptional," helping protect them before they are lost.

• Strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection

The bill establishes a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state.

• Supports long-term urban forest stewardship

Better coordination and updated criteria will help ensure Hawai'i's urban forests remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

• Has strong support from the agencies responsible for implementation

The bill is supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals.

For these reasons, I **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2372 SD2** and respectfully urge legislators to **advance SB2372 SD2**.

Mahalo.

- P. Hau'oli ipo Wright

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:28:08 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Wah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 2372 SD2.

Since 1975, the Exceptional Tree Act has protected many heritage trees across the state, something we should all be grateful for as trees provide beauty as well as many health benefits.

This bill would strengthen and update the program, bringing it more in line with current times, and would allow for more trees of significance to be protected in the future, something that would benefit all communities as well as that state as a whole. It would also provide a framework for the four established Arborist Advisory Committees to coordinate so they can work together creating a more consistent program where they can learn from each other and make more long-range planning decisions.

Please vote in **support of SB2372**, to protect more heritage trees.

Thank you!

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:44:39 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
bob ress	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Advance this bill, SB2372 SD2 because exceptional trees contribute to Hawai'i's sense of place and cultural identity. Protect them.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:48:30 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thinh Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Advance SB2372 SD2 to protect trees which are so important to our islands.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:52:50 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marisa Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Vote Yes on SB2372 SD2. Protecting our trees protects our islands' beauty.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 4:20:17 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexander Ress	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Exceptional trees are a major aspect of Hawaii's natural beauty. This bill strengthens statewide coordination on protecting these trees and the bill should be adopted. Thank you.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 2:45:25 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Whitney Bosel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this common sense, non-controversial bill and urge you to advance it. Trees offer us so many benefits- let's do what we can to help protect and nurture them, and protect what the state has invested in already more efficiently. The bill is in line with the state's goals regarding urban forestry -this just helps the state reach those goals.

SB-2372-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:14:36 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elaine Terry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2372 SD2 Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree law has protected some of the state's most important trees for over fifty years. This bill updates this program using modern urban forestry science and strengthens the framework for protecting these irreplaceable living landmarks. We STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2372.

Key reasons to support the bill include:

• **Modernizes Hawai'i's Exceptional Tree program**

The bill updates the statewide framework for identifying and designating exceptional trees using modern arboriculture and urban forestry principles.

• **Protects trees that anchor Hawai'i's landscapes and community character**

Exceptional trees are living landmarks that contribute to Hawai'i's sense of place and cultural identity.

• **Creates a pathway to recognize significant trees earlier**

SB2372 SD2 establishes a designation for important trees that may not yet qualify as "exceptional," helping protect them before they are lost.

• **Strengthens statewide coordination on tree protection**

The bill establishes a State Arborist Advisory Committee to coordinate with county advisory committees and promote consistency across the state.

- **Supports long-term urban forest stewardship**

Better coordination and updated criteria will help ensure Hawai'i's urban forests remain healthy and resilient for future generations.

- **Has strong support from the agencies responsible for implementation**

The bill is supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources and aligns with the state's urban forestry goals.