

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Water and Land

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 411 and Videoconference

In Support

Senate Bill No. 2907, SD1, HD1, Relating to Marine Affairs

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

The Office of the Governor **supports** Senate Bill No. 2907, SD1, HD1 Relating to Marine Affairs. This bill declares the State an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation; creates and funds a Marine Affairs Coordinator position; repeals the powers and duties of DBEDT in marine affairs; and transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs.

Hawai'i's identity, economy, and long-term resilience are inseparable from the ocean. Our ocean economy spans commercial fisheries, maritime transportation, ocean science, defense, renewable energy, tourism, and coastal resilience, and is grounded in generations of Native Hawaiian stewardship and knowledge. This unique convergence of culture, geography, and innovation positions Hawai'i as a global leader in sustainable ocean development.

The Office of the Governor believes that establishing an Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation will provide the focused leadership necessary to harness that advantage. A centralized Office will drive coordinated action across state agencies, research institutions, and private-sector partners. Strategic support through a consultant will accelerate implementation and strengthen Hawai'i's competitiveness for federal research funding and private investment.

By strengthening coordination and focus, this bill advances economic diversification, supports workforce development, and reinforces responsible ocean stewardship.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Water and Land

Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 am
Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

As the state agency dedicated to advancing technology-based economic development and positioning Hawai'i as a leader in the space and ocean sectors, the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) recognizes the significance of SB2907 SD1 HD1 in strengthening coordination and strategic focus around marine affairs. The establishment of the Office of Marine Affairs and the Marine Affairs Coordinator align with our mission to foster innovation and growth within the blue economy, a sector that holds substantial promise for Hawai'i's future.

HTDC particularly values the bill's recognition of Hawai'i as an "ocean cluster," which mirrors global best practices in innovation ecosystems where concentrated expertise and resources accelerate sectoral growth, and the creation of a task force that allows for the creation of a shared vision and strategy for our blue economy. In addition we appreciate having the Office of Marine Affairs placed back under HTDC, and we request that the bill be amended to have the salary for the coordinator position also be set by HTDC.

HTDC is here to support the blue economy in any capacity we can serve. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



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

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 Committee on
WATER & LAND

Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2907, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Senate Bill 2907, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1, proposes to declare that the State is an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation; establishes the Marine Affairs Coordinator position; requires the Marine Affairs Coordinator to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature; transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs; and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Marine Affairs Coordinator position. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this bill and offers the following comments.**

The Department recognizes the great potential of expanding the State's blue economy through the designation of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and the establishment of the Office of Marine Affairs. The pursuit of economic growth and technological innovation must be carefully integrated with sustainable resource management and respect for cultural knowledge and practices. As the agency tasked with managing and administering the aquatic life and aquatic resources of the state, the Department has developed and is currently implementing strategies to manage and restore aquatic ecosystems and fisheries for present and future generations. To ensure continuity and effective natural resource management, it is important that the duties bestowed on the Office of Marine Affairs in section 187A-C(a)(1) do not supplant the strategies and priorities of the Department, but rather integrate the Department's ongoing work.

Finally, the Department notes that chapter 187A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS)—the chapter being proposed for the addition of a new part to be designated as “Marine Affairs”—governs the management of aquatic natural resources by the Department. It may be more appropriate to add this new statutory part to a different chapter or to establish an entirely new chapter.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY WITH COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL 2907 SD1 HD1

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Wai a me ka ‘Āina

(House Committee on Water & Land)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 24, 2026

9:00 am

Lumi 411

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS** on **SB2907 SD1 HD1**, which declares the State an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes only. The measure further establishes a Marine Affairs Coordinator and names the Chief Executive Officer of OHA, or designee, as a member of the Marine Affairs Task Force.

OHA appreciates being expressly named as a statutory member of the Marine Affairs Task Force and, if enacted, willingly accepts this kuleana. OHA has longstanding experience in marine governance, including serving as Co-Trustee of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and Co-Manager of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Sanctuary. OHA is also statutorily charged with assessing the policies and practices of other agencies impacting Native Hawaiians and Hawaiians pursuant to HRS §10-3. OHA’s participation in this task force therefore brings both beneficiary advocacy and constitutional public trust expertise to the statewide marine policy discussion.

The placing of the Task Force within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation underscores the need for clear stewardship guardrails to protect marine resources. While SB2907 SD1 HD1 directs the Office to develop a statewide strategy that prioritizes sustainable use, conservation, and stewardship of marine resources, the enumerated duties emphasize competitiveness, commercialization pathways, capital attraction, and technology-enabled marine industry growth.

Accordingly, as one step towards ensuring greater balance in this bill, OHA respectfully requests the following amendment to the coordinator’s enumerated duties., explicitly embedding a clear framework would ensure that marine coordination strengthens—not supplants—existing conservation safeguards.

To better reflect the balance needed for the development of marine resources, page 11, line 13, would be amended to read:

"...determine financial requirements for the total and optimum development of the State's marine resources based on the goals and needs of the State, consistent with constitutional and statutory mandates related to natural resource protection."

Additionally, as a technical amendment, OHA notes that the language for the OHA representative (page 9 lines 16-17) should be amended to read as follows:

The chairperson of the board of trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, or the chairperson's designee.

SB2907 SD1 HD1 presents an opportunity to improve interagency alignment and reduce fragmentation in marine governance. With appropriate guardrails, the measure can support innovation and economic diversification while maintaining Hawai'i's obligations to protect reef ecosystems, cultural practices, and public trust resources for present and future generations.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
March 24, 2026
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2907, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports S.B. 2907, SD1, HD1, which designates Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes an Office of Marine Affairs. ADC supports the HD1 amendment placing the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to better advance innovation and economic development for the State.

Hawai'i's geography makes the ocean economy foundational to statewide resilience, food security, workforce development, and economic diversification. Establishing a formal "ocean cluster" creates a coordinated framework to align applied research, commercialization, permitting, workforce development, and industry engagement across agencies, the University of Hawai'i, and private sector partners.

Positioning the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC will strengthen the State's ability to translate research and innovation into scalable economic opportunities. HTDC's mission and experience in technology development, commercialization, and public-private partnerships make it well-suited to support

emerging sectors such as aquaculture, marine biotechnology, and ocean-based innovation. This placement will help accelerate investment, support local entrepreneurs, and build a competitive blue economy ecosystem.

Other jurisdictions demonstrate the value of coordinated ocean economy strategies in driving innovation, job creation, and investment in areas such as aquaculture and marine technology. Hawai'i is well-positioned to build on these models through a structure that prioritizes innovation and commercialization.

ADC notes that aquaculture is already included within Hawai'i's statutory definition of agriculture, reinforcing that marine food production is a core component of the State's agricultural system. A statewide ocean cluster strengthens coordination across food production, innovation, and resource stewardship.

S.B. 2907, SD1, HD1, is a timely step to position Hawai'i for coordinated, investable growth in the blue economy while supporting sustainable ocean management and long-term economic resilience.

For these reasons, ADC supports S.B. 2907, SD1, HD1, which places the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation. ADC's position may be further refined following review and discussion at its Board meeting scheduled for March 31.



NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAII AUTHORITY



An Authority of the State of Hawaii attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

Statement of
Laurence Sombardier, Deputy Director
For Riley M. Saito, Executive Director
Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2907, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on SB2907, SD1, HD1 which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a dedicated staff position, and transfers the personnel and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the new office.

NELHA is a self-sufficient state agency supporting more than 55 companies and generating an estimated annual economic impact of \$148 million for Hawai'i, according to the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization's analysis for calendar year 2022. Our mission includes advancing ocean research, innovation, and technology development at the 870-acre Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park on Hawai'i Island.

A robust and environmentally responsible blue economy is essential to strengthening Hawai'i's economic resilience, protecting natural resources, addressing climate-related challenges, and creating high-quality local jobs. Hawai'i already possesses many of the foundational assets needed to lead globally in this sector, including:

- A strategic location in the Pacific
- World-class infrastructure such as HOST Park
- Exceptional marine biodiversity
- Indigenous knowledge systems, including sustainable loko i'a practices
- Leading research institutions in ocean and climate sciences
- Established and successful ocean-focused businesses
- Strong public support for marine stewardship

Centralized leadership through an Office of Marine Affairs would help coordinate efforts across agencies and stakeholders, leverage existing strengths, and develop a cohesive statewide strategy. A dedicated office can also ensure that data, research, and community input are translated into actionable policy that advances Hawai'i's blue economy in a sustainable and culturally grounded manner.

We also note that other measures under consideration address related aspects of blue economy development. Aligning the efforts envisioned across these bills would help prevent duplication and strengthen their overall impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

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
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9560 FAX: (808) 973-9613

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

**TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026
9:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 411**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2907, SD1, HD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2907, SD1, HD1. The bill declares that the State is an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes only, establishes the Marine Affairs Coordinator position, requires the Marine Affairs Coordinator to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature, transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Marine Affairs Coordinator position. The Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) supports this measure.

Declaring Hawaii an ocean cluster and establishing an Office of Marine Affairs articulates a clear, future-oriented vision that honors the State's identity as an ocean nation while positioning it to lead in a rapidly expanding global blue economy. The bill recognizes that Hawaii's long-standing relationship between people and sea, rooted in Native Hawaiian knowledge and stewardship, is not only a cultural foundation but also a strategic asset for shaping a more sustainable and innovative ocean-based development model that includes advanced, climate-smart aquaculture development under the DAB and the Aquaculture Development Program. By framing marine affairs around culture, stewardship, innovation, and coordinated ocean-cluster governance rather than narrow sectoral interests, SB2907, SD1, HD1 provides a coherent framework within which restorative and commercial aquaculture initiatives can be aligned with broader economic growth, community well-being, and ocean health, consistent with Hawaii's values and responsibilities to future generations.

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



WaiHome LLC
59-477 Hoalike Road
Haleiwa, HI, 96712

Statement of
Gregory Wong
Co-Founder and Engineer at WaiHome LLC
before the
**House Committee on Water & Land
& House Committee on Finance**

Tuesday, March 24th, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

To: Chair Ichiyama, Chair Todd, and Members of the Committees

WaiHome LLC stands in strong support of SB2907, SD1. As a Hawaii-based wastewater startup funded by the NSF, NOAA, and HTDC, we believe that formally recognizing Hawaii as an "ocean cluster" and establishing an Office of Marine Affairs is a vital investment in our state's economic future. We support this measure for the following reasons:

Commercializing Local Innovation: SB2907, SD1 HD1 focuses on promoting "technology-enabled marine industries". For WaiHome, this coordination is the difference between our excavation-free wastewater systems remaining a "research project" and becoming a scalable manufacturing business that helps Hawaii's 83,000 cesspool owners.

Retaining Technical Talent: By addressing regulatory barriers and streamlining the blue economy, this bill ensures that startups like ours can continue to hire from the local workforce. Currently, Hawaii-born innovation often moves to the mainland to scale; this bill creates the infrastructure to keep those high-paying tech jobs here. At WaiHome, we are proud to say that our team was hired 100% locally.

Protecting Hawaii's Primary Asset: This bill recognizes that our environment is our economy. At WaiHome, we use advanced technology to protect our reefs from pollution. We are living proof that Hawaii can lead a global industry in coastal protection technology by leveraging our unique geographic and cultural expertise.

I urge the committee to pass SB2907, SD1 to ensure Hawaii remains at the forefront of the global blue economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Wong".

Gregory Wong
Co-founder and Engineer
WaiHome LLC



PO Box 1095
Kurtistown, Hawaii
+1-808-938-2840
jim.wyban@gmail.com

March 22 2026

Committee on Water & Land

In consideration of SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

Marine Genetics strongly **SUPPORTS SB 2907**, which formally recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC). This bill is a critical step to strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy and grow economic opportunities across the Pacific Islands.

Hawai'i's blue economy contributes over \$10 billion to our GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the U.S. largest island state in the Pacific and ocean steward in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is not only uniquely positioned to innovate but to attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments to sustain the local blue economy and address critical marine issues.

SB2907 provides dedicated leadership, strategic coordination across the public and private sectors, and annual reporting for Hawai'i blue economy activities, ensuring that economic development, technology advancement, and cultural stewardship remain priorities. The bill will help attract new funding opportunities, create future-ready jobs, and support collaboration across public-private sectors.

I founded and developed the world's first SPF shrimp breeding company which was based at NELHA. We commercialized the Hawaii-born SPF shrimp technology and sold SPF broodstock to 26 countries. This Hawaii-born technology transformed the global shrimp industry and resulted in a 6x growth in the industry. Hawaii companies now export over \$20M/year in SPF products. After 20 years in business, we sold the company to an Asian multinational. My experience is a good example of what Hawaii can achieve in Ocean Industries if the industry receives government support.

In summary, SB2907 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean technology and innovation while realizing the vision of a resilient economic future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Sincerely,

Jim Wyban, Founder/CEO
Marine Genetics LLC



Hawai'i Angels
335 Merchant Street, Suite #516
Honolulu, HI 96813

Statement of **Alexi Drouin**
Assistant Director, Hawai'i Angels

before the

Committee on Water & Land

Regarding SB2907:
Relating to Marine Affairs

Testimony in Support

Date: March 22, 2026

To:

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair,
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha,

My name is Alexi Drouin, and I am the Assistant Director at Hawai'i Angels, Program Operations at Blue Startups, and Ambassador for Hawai'i Tech Week. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of SB2907**.

Hawai'i Angels is a statewide startup investing group. We support founders with early capital, and we convene entrepreneurs and investors through a regular pitch forum. Our work depends on a strong pipeline of local companies and the partners that help them grow in Hawai'i.

SB2907 strengthens Hawai'i's ability to compete in the **blue economy** by directing the **Governor's Office** to establish the **Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Coordinator** to develop, coordinate, and implement **ocean technology and innovation initiatives**. This includes building a statewide strategy, coordinating cross-agency work, identifying gaps and opportunities, pursuing funding, supporting workforce development, and reporting progress.

This approach supports outcomes that matter statewide. It grows **high-skill jobs**. It accelerates **economic diversification**. It strengthens **resilience** through ocean observation and coastal

solutions. It improves Hawai'i's ability to **attract and retain talent and investment**. It also increases **statewide participation** across all islands.

For Hawai'i Angels, clearer statewide coordination and strategy in ocean innovation helps more founders understand where the opportunities are and how to connect to **public and private partners**. It also helps outside investors see Hawai'i has an organized **pipeline** and credible **infrastructure** for ocean technology development.

For these reasons, Hawai'i Angels respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB2907** with a recommendation of **support** and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

Alexi Drouin
Assistant Director
Hawai'i Angels





Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the WAL Committee on
Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 9:00 AM

Regarding **SB2907**:
“Relating to Marine Affairs”

Testimony in Support

Date: March 22, 2026

From: Chenoa Farnsworth
Managing Director, Blue Startups
chenoa@bluestartups.com

To:

Committee on Water & Land:

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair,
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha,

My name is Chenoa Farnsworth, and I am the Managing Director at Blue Startups. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB2907**.

Blue Startups was founded to help **diversify Hawai‘i’s economy** by building a stronger technology sector. For more than a decade, we have supported entrepreneurs building companies in Hawai‘i. Blue Startups is launching an **Ocean Tech Program** this summer designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

Hawai‘i’s ocean and coastal strengths have the power to touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism.

We strongly support the Committee to **pass SB2907** and advance it through the remaining referrals. A **Marine Affairs Coordinator** can help align strategy with execution. This includes

identifying barriers, building partnerships, and pursuing public and federal resources that local companies and researchers can use to test, deploy, and scale solutions in Hawai'i.

This bill's focus on investment readiness and commercialization pathways is especially important for turning ideas into **jobs** and deployable projects.

SB2907 supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens **economic diversification**. It improves **resilience** through coastal and ocean-related innovation. It expands pathways to **higher-wage jobs** in technology-enabled ocean sectors. It helps attract and retain **talent and investment** by presenting a clear statewide strategy and a coordinated entry point for engagement across all islands.

SB2907 is a practical step toward stronger coordination and stronger results for Hawai'i's **blue economy**. We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB2907** with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

Chenoa Farnsworth
Managing Director
Blue Startups



SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 5:29:41 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Alana Marsili | Privateer Space Inc. | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Statement of Privateer Space

Before the Committee on Water & Land

In consideration of SB2907, SD1, HD1 – RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of SB2907. I respectfully resubmit this testimony as the measure advances to the Committee on Water & Land.

SB2907 is a critical step in recognizing Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishing the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC. For this Committee, the bill is especially important as it strengthens coordination across the State’s water, land, and marine resource systems—ensuring these domains are managed with greater alignment, visibility, and long-term strategy.

Hawai‘i sits at the center of increasingly complex maritime activity in the Pacific. Today, the State faces a convergence of pressures—ranging from illegal and unregulated fishing, to gray-zone maritime behavior, to growing strain on port infrastructure and coastal systems. At the same time, global dynamics—from the Indo-Pacific to chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz—are placing additional demand on U.S. and partner capacity, underscoring the need for earlier awareness and faster decision-making closer to home.

SB2907 helps position Hawai‘i to meet this moment. By establishing a central coordinating body, the State can better integrate data, technology, and policy across agencies responsible for ocean, land, and water resources—supporting more informed stewardship while enabling proactive responses to emerging risks.

Privateer Space is a Hawai‘i-based geospatial intelligence company focused on maritime domain awareness and commercial data integration. Our work supports governments in understanding vessel activity, identifying risks to marine ecosystems, and improving decision timelines in complex maritime environments. Programs supported by HTDC have been instrumental in enabling companies like ours to build locally and contribute to Hawai‘i’s innovation ecosystem.

This bill does not prescribe solutions—it creates the structure needed to coordinate them. In doing so, it strengthens Hawai‘i’s ability to balance economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and security in a rapidly changing maritime environment.

For these reasons, we strongly support SB2907.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,
Alana Marsili
Director of Government & Foreign Relations
Privateer Space



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

My name is Dr. Nicholas Ulm. I am the CEO and Founder of Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS). My company produces Hālonā WEC, which is a wave energy buoy that aims to reduce the cost of powering our local blue economy activities. The buoy produces power on the same principles that makes the Halona blowhole spout and was developed as a part of my PhD at the University of Hawaii.

I have dedicated the last decade and the entirety of my adult life to addressing our state's food and energy security needs. I was born and raised here on Oahu; I would like to see more people like me continue to be able to make it here. My story is like that of so many of our kama'aina. I spent as much time in the ocean as I did in the classroom. I went to college in the continental US, received a degree in engineering, and unlike many of the friends I grew up with, I was privileged enough to be able to come back to the islands.

I returned to Hawaii and the UH Ocean & Resource Engineering PhD program because it is one of the best in the nation. This program is strengthened by a local blue economy, with companies that readily hire local graduates and strong innovation and workforce development programs, such as Purple Mai'a and KUPU. I want to emphasize that this blue economy structure supports an exceptionally high hire rate for graduates within one month of graduation. These positions are good-paying, local jobs that offer deep fulfillment, particularly for those of us who were raised here.

Although UH was able to help me to form the technological foundations, it was limited in how much they could support the commercialization. I was privileged to be supported by UH HITIDE and Hatch Blue through the Ocean Foundry Incubator program, both supported in part through the state. This was my first interaction with state supported business development and it was transformative to my company. But right when we started to see growth, it sunsetted and the federal administration changed. Everyone knew this was coming, but there was a lack of overarching coordination at a higher state level to make sure that this lapse didn't come for companies like mine.

So HOPS had to look elsewhere for support. Both programs directed us towards the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerator. This is a federally funded program that was set up during the previous administration to bring blue economy technologies to full commercial readiness. The federal government administered this funding to ocean cluster organizations. As is made clear by this bill, Hawaii does not currently have that designation. We currently do not have the coordination at the state level to receive those funds to support our ocean-based economy.

So I again had to look to the continental US for support. I was privileged to be accepted into a program in Los Angeles called Braid Theory, which is located at Altasea. Their program networked us with all the other ocean clusters across the country and what I saw simultaneously

made me excited and disappointed. These clusters were only a few years old, but in the time since their founding, the companies that sprung up around them had rapidly grown from the coordination and connectivity the clusters provided. Why wasn't this something that was present in the community that I had come from?

The coordination at the state or municipal level brought together community organizations who had issues with technologists who had solutions to meet both needs. I saw these cluster organizers connecting harbor masters who had issues with pollution management with community organizers concerned on the pollution impacts and technology companies with solutions to pollution mitigation. The cluster worked to orchestrate collaboration to address the issue. It centered the process on shared values and provided avenues for trust, while helping the economy to grow. It was not exploitative or extractive, it was collaboratively competitive. It produced the excellence that we strive for here locally.

This can happen here in Hawaii. We managed to get started a federally supported pilot program here in Hawaii for blue economy technologies, that starts this summer. HTDC brought in the community and stakeholders to set the values. Hawaii companies pushed the feds to set up the program with these values in mind, and actually convinced them to buy in. One of these pilots is a training program for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders to become remotely controlled underwater vehicle pilots. This program will not require a college degree, is 4 weeks long, and can be used for verification of the efficacy of conservation projects under the Green Fee.

We have the grassroots foundations for a strong blue economy, it's time for the state to start better coordinating support for the local blue economy. HTDC has done great work this past year to coordinate with the local blue economy, but it still feels like efforts are happening in silo.

We need to enable them with better organizational coordination to pursue these federal opportunities. I implore you to designate Hawaii as an ocean cluster to create structures that will support kama'aina like me, who just want to keep generations of ocean loving people in Hawaii.

Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS) respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of **SB2907**.

DATE: March 22, 2026

TO: **Representative Hashem (WAL Chair), Representative Morikawa (WAL Vice Chair)**

FROM: George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

RE: **S.B. 2907, S.D. 1 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

PUBLIC DECISION DATE: **March 24, 2026**

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

I submit this testimony in **support of Senate Bill 2907, S.D. 1**, which declares Hawai'i an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs, creates the Marine Affairs Coordinator position, and appropriates funds to support the office's operations.

I am an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Over the past several years, I have worked alongside the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) and other partners to support the development of Hawai'i's technology ecosystem—convening stakeholders, attracting investment, and helping build the organizational infrastructure for a statewide blue economy strategy. I grew up in Hawai'i, returned home to start a family, and the question of how we build a more resilient, innovation-driven economy here is one I take personally.

Declaring Hawai'i an Ocean Cluster Sends a Critical Signal

Hawai'i's Blue Economy already supports nearly 100,000 jobs and generates \$9.2 billion in GDP. Formally recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster signals to the local innovation community and federal funding agencies that ocean technology development is a state priority. This top-down commitment positions Hawai'i to pursue large-scale ecosystem development grants—as an example the Ocean Regional Opportunity and Innovation Act (S.1392/H.R.3048) if released and the NSF EPSCoR grant, which both would provide multi million dollar investments into community building around tech ecosystems. Without a formal designation and an operational office behind it, we risk being passed over for opportunities that other coastal states are already pursuing.

The Marine Affairs Coordinator Is the Foundation This Work Requires

The early months of a new office are foundational—they determine whether the right national and international partnerships are formed and whether the office enters the field with credibility or plays catch-up for years. The Marine Affairs Coordinator position funded in this bill is the essential first step: a dedicated, experienced professional who can continue the momentum that HTDC with the supporting consultants and subject matter experts have created. Actions such as align cross-sector stakeholders, coordinate state agencies, and represent Hawai'i in national and international blue economy conversations.

To be effective from day one, the Coordinator will need access to specialized expertise and technical knowledge—whether through subject matter experts, university partnerships, or other

flexible support structures. The groundwork has been laid over the past eight months through collaborative work across the ocean tech community, government agencies, and research institutions.

This Investment Positions Hawai'i to Compete

Successful ocean clusters in San Diego, Norway, Iceland, and Washington did not emerge organically—they were built through deliberate, coordinated public investment. Hawai'i has the geography, the cultural heritage, the research institutions, and the industry base to compete at that level. What we have lacked is the institutional structure to convert those assets into coordinated economic development. S.B. 2907, S.D. 1 begins to provide that structure.

I urge the committee to pass S.B. 2907, S.D. 1 and ensure the investment of building a thriving ocean tech and innovation ecosystem.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

George Yarbrough

IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

gyarbrough@economicrecoverycorps.org



Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the WAM Committee on
Wednesday, March 4th at 10:31 AM

Regarding **SB 2907**:
“Relating to the Office of Marine Affairs from HTDC to the Governor’s Office”

Testimony in Support

Date: March 2, 2026

From: David Holt
Program Director, Blue Startups
david@bluestartups.com

WAM Committee:

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki
Esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Holt, and I am the Program Director at Blue Startups. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB 2907**.

Blue Startups was founded to help **diversify Hawai‘i’s economy** by building a stronger technology sector. For more than a decade, we have supported entrepreneurs building companies in Hawai‘i.

Blue Startups is launching an **Ocean Tech Program** this summer designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

Hawai‘i’s ocean and coastal strengths have the power to touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism.

We strongly support the Committee in passing **SB 2907** and advancing it through the remaining referrals.

A **Marine Affairs Coordinator** can help align strategy with execution. This includes identifying barriers, building partnerships, and pursuing public and federal resources that local companies

and researchers can use to test, deploy, and scale solutions in Hawai'i. The bill's focus on investment readiness and commercialization pathways is especially important for turning ideas into **jobs** and deployable projects.

SB 2907 supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens **economic diversification**. It improves **resilience** through coastal and ocean-related innovation. It expands pathways to **higher wage jobs** in technology-enabled ocean sectors. It helps attract and retain **talent and investment** by presenting a clear statewide strategy and a coordinated entry point for engagement across all islands.

SB 2907 is a practical step toward stronger coordination and stronger results for Hawai'i's **blue economy**. We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB 2907** with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

David Holt
Program Director
Blue Startups





DATE: 3/23/2026

TO: Rep. Mark Hashem
Chair on House Water and Land Committee

Rep. Dee Morikawa
Vice Chair on House Water and Land Committee

FROM: Hohonu

RE: **SB 2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs**
HEARING DATE: 3/24/2026

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa and members of the House Water and Land Committee,

Hohonu **strongly supports** Senate Bill 2907 as a catalyst for growing the ecosystem of companies around the state working in the blue economy. Hohonu was founded in 2019 in Hawai'i by Dr. Brian Glazer, a professor at UH Manoa, to address persistent gaps in flood monitoring. Today, Hohonu operates flood monitoring networks across 18 states, including Hawai'i, serving federal partners, state agencies, counties, municipalities, institutions of higher education, and the private consulting sector. Hohonu is headquartered in Honolulu where it designs, develops and manufactures its water level sensors.

Leadership from the Office of Marine Affairs, situated under the Governor's Office, and the use of a coordinator for planning and executing a blue economy strategy, will have the positive effect of coordinating the local blue economy ecosystem and aligning stakeholders in both the private and public sector. Companies, especially hardware companies like Hohonu, thrive when there is a strong, connected ecosystem of companies growing the local skill base and supply chain. There are compounding benefits to having related companies in a single area: similar job opportunities allow local talent to develop related skills early on, knowledge spillover accelerates innovation, local suppliers and service providers can specialize and grow to meet increased demand and a cluster attracts more investment and more outside interest from buyers.

Hohonu is in a strong position to grow and thrive, but as we grow we will be constrained by the local availability of specialized talent, availability of suppliers capable of scaling with us and logistics challenges related to both fulfillment of orders and imports of necessary components. These challenges are neither unique to Hohonu nor new. The Office of Marine Affairs, under the Office of the Governor, is well positioned to address these problems across a blue economy

cluster and we have a better chance at solving them by dedicating a resource to focus on coordination across the many groups involved.

Hawai'i is a unique and challenging location to start a technology company and it requires a focused, highly collaborative effort to be successful. We believe Senate Bill 2907 will enable that collaboration and success and **we strongly support its passage**

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Noah Pentelovitch
Head of Hardware
Hohonu



Statement of
Valerie Harmon
Founder and CEO
Namaka Algae, Inc.
before the

- **House, Water and Land Committee:** Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Dee Morikawa and esteemed members of the House, Water and Land Committee

By Friday March 23, 2026 9 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907

Nāmaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** SB2907, which formally recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC). This bill is a critical step to strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy and grow economic opportunities across the Pacific Islands.

Hawai'i's Blue Economy contributes over \$10 billion to our GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the U.S. largest island state in the Pacific and ocean steward in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is not only uniquely positioned to innovate but to attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments to sustain the local blue economy and address critical marine issues.

SB2907 provides dedicated leadership, strategic coordination across the public and private sectors, and annual reporting for Hawai'i blue economy activities, ensuring that economic development, technology advancement, and cultural stewardship remain priorities. The bill will help attract new funding opportunities, create future-ready jobs, and support collaboration across public-private sectors.

Nāmaka Algae, Inc. is a technology first company focused on low-cost algae biomass for fish superfoods. We produce in Hawai'i for Hawai'i markets and plan to expand to the US mainland and globally for larger market access and profitability. Aquaculture has the potential to provide efficient, low carbon footprint protein to feed our growing populations, and at Nāmaka we aim to support the growth of this industry by providing quality, reliable and nutritious feed ingredients made from microalgae. We support HTDCs programs which benefit our company greatly. The focus on Marine and Ocean tech and industries is vital to continue the growth and expansion of our industries to support job growth, and ultimately improved food security for our Islands.



In summary, SB2907 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean technology and innovation while realizing the vision of a resilient economic future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon



**Testimony to the House Committee on Water & Land
Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 24, 2026, at 9:00AM
Conference Room 411 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2907 SD1 HD1 Relating to Marine Affairs

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii (“The Chamber”). The Chamber testifies in strong support of Senate Bill 2907 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 1 (SB2907 SD1 HD1), which declares that the State is an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and Marine Affairs Task Force within the Hawai’i Technology Development Corporation. Establishes and appropriates funds for the Marine Affairs Coordinator position. Repeals the powers and duties of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism in marine affairs. Transfers the employees and functions of the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs.

SB2907 SD1 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Small Business. This bill promotes the growth of Hawaii’s blue economy, encompassing industries such as marine technology, offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, ocean data systems, and marine robotics—all sectors that can build a stronger, more resilient Hawaii economy.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the global ocean economy could exceed \$3 trillion by 2030. With Hawaii’s strategic geographic position in the Pacific, access to world-class ocean research assets, and a talented local workforce, the State is well-positioned to serve as a regional hub for these emerging industries. According to analyses by UHERO, innovation-driven sectors provide higher-than-average wages and greater economic stability. Developing a blue economy will not only diversify our industries beyond tourism—which still accounts for 17.1% of the State’s GDP (2023)—but also generate high paying jobs for local residents.

Furthermore, Hawaii currently imports about 85–90% of its food and about 67% of its energy (2024). Expanding ocean innovation in areas like offshore renewable energy and sustainable aquaculture supports State goals to reduce dependence on imports, enhance food and energy security, and work towards reaching 100% clean energy by 2045.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 2907 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state’s leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii’s economy and securing Hawaii’s future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



AI.FISH

TO: Representative Hashem, Chair, Committee on Water & Land
Representative Morikawa, Vice Chair, Committee on Water & Land
FROM: Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish
RE: S.B. 2907, S.D. 1, H.D. 1 – Relating to Marine Affairs
HEARING DATE: March 24, 2026

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

I am Jimmy Freese, CEO of Ai.Fish, a Hawai‘i-based ocean technology company that uses AI-powered computer vision and electronic monitoring systems to support sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation. I am testifying in strong support of SB2907 SD1 HD1, relating to marine affairs.

SB2907 SD1 HD1 takes a significant step forward for Hawai‘i’s blue economy by formally declaring the State an ocean cluster and establishing the Office of Marine Affairs and Marine Affairs Task Force within the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation. For companies like Ai.Fish that are building commercially viable ocean technology right here in Hawai‘i, this kind of institutional commitment is exactly what we need to grow and compete globally. Housing the Office within HTDC is a strong choice—it places ocean industry coordination where technology commercialization already happens.

The bill’s creation of a marine affairs coordinator and task force will provide the dedicated coordination capacity that Hawai‘i’s ocean industries have long needed. In our experience, the biggest barrier to scaling ocean technology is not ideas or technology itself, but the time and capacity required to align public agencies, private companies, researchers, and ocean users around shared priorities. A coordinator supported by a task force that includes HTDC, the University of Hawai‘i, and industry representatives is well-positioned to break down those silos.

Ai.Fish has seen firsthand how coordination drives results. Over seven years, HTDC has been a critical partner—from funding and commercialization support to helping us compete for federal funding. SB2907 SD1 HD1 builds on that foundation by creating statewide coordination infrastructure that connects the full range of blue economy stakeholders, from marine biotechnology to fisheries to coastal resilience. Designating Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster also sends a clear signal to federal agencies and private investors that our state is serious about leading in this space, with the global ocean economy projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030.

In summary, Ai.Fish strongly supports SB2907 SD1 HD1 because it establishes the coordination infrastructure needed for Hawai‘i to fully realize its potential as a global ocean cluster, supporting homegrown innovators and creating economic opportunities across the State. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Jimmy Freese
CEO and Co-Founder
Ai.Fish

SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 2:01:06 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Sam A Young | Voltage Vessels | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

My name is Sam Young, Founder and CEO of Voltage Vessels, a Hawai‘i-based advanced materials and manufacturing company working across marine, coastal, and resilience-relevant applications.

I am writing in support of **SB2907 Relating to Marine Affairs**.

Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to lead in ocean innovation, coastal resilience, and marine technology, but that leadership requires a policy environment that supports practical collaboration, responsible pilot projects, and the development of local capability. Measures that strengthen marine affairs coordination and create clearer pathways for responsible innovation are important for companies, researchers, and community partners working to solve real challenges in our waters and along our shorelines.

From our perspective, Hawai‘i benefits when local organizations are better able to develop, test, and deploy solutions that improve marine stewardship, coastal resilience, and ocean-based economic opportunity. Supporting this work helps build long-term capacity in the islands while ensuring that innovation remains grounded in local needs and environmental responsibility.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of SB2907.

Sincerely,
Sam Young
Founder & CEO
Voltage Vessels
Haiku, Hawai‘i

SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:03:26 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Comment

IRAN WAR IS COSTING TAXPAYERS 1BILLION \$ A DAY. LEGISLATURES MUST BE FISCAL RESPONSIBLE THIS SESSION WITH MEASURES SEEKING APPROPRIATES FUNDS, TAX CREDIT, ETC.

2907 SB RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

Dear Chairman Hashem, Vice-chairwoman Morikawa, and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Joshua Baghdady and my career is a testament to the power of the blue economy to connect people, ideas, and activities for the health and sustainability of our blue planet. I wish to testify in **strong support** of Senate Bill 2907 (SD1 HD1) to establish Hawai'i as an ocean cluster.

I was homeschooled in the coastal state of South Carolina and studied electrical engineering at Clemson University. In graduate school, I was fortunate enough to work on a project funded by the Office of Naval Research investigating the use of semiconductor lasers for underwater wireless communications. While presenting my work at a marine technology conference in California, I met a physical oceanographer and marine ecologist from the US Coast Guard who became my mentor in all things relating to the ocean. I was intrigued by this linkage of technology and marine stewardship and decided to pivot my career in this direction. My mentor introduced me to Margo Edwards, the director of the Applied Research Laboratory at UH, and I began my professional career here in Hawai'i in 2017. Over the past decade I have been involved on a myriad of marine-related projects, from ocean sensing with robots, buoys, and undersea cables to supporting ecology studies of Hawaiian green sea turtle resting habits in Pearl Harbor. I have also been involved at the national and international levels as an ocean advocate, co-founding both the Marine Technology Society Early Career Ocean Professionals program and the UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals Network Programme. I was in the room at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France in June 2025 when around 30 countries adopted the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction to establish international protections for the High Seas. This experience and exposure have convinced me that the blue economy is society's pathway to sustainable development in the 21st century, and I look forward to working with the state to catalyze a new era of economic prosperity for Hawai'i that is anchored in the largest and most precious natural resource our species has the privilege to steward: our oceans. Thank you very much.

Statement of
Doreen Wong
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor
before the
Committee on Water and Land

Tuesday, March 24, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB 2907 RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

I'm Doreen Wong, a climate, infrastructure, and sustainability professional, focusing on the sustainable blue economy, ocean technology and innovation. I strongly urge you to **SUPPORT SB 2907**, which recognizes Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes a coordinated statewide structure, including an Office of Marine Affairs, a Marine Affairs Task Force, and a dedicated coordinator position. This measure is a timely investment in Hawai'i's long-term economic resilience, strengthening statewide coordination so Hawai'i can be competitive for funding and resources, move from plans to action, and deliver community benefits rooted in ocean stewardship.

I bring 14 years of experience working at the intersection of technology innovation, policy, and finance across global, regional, and local levels. I currently advise NOAA-funded Ocean Enterprise Accelerators, including UC San Diego's StartBlue and VentureWell, and have collaborated with Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) and the University of Hawai'i to develop our state's ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. As a Contributing Member of the 1000 Ocean Startups coalition, a global network of over 60 incubators, accelerators, venture capital firms, and other capital providers (several with ties to Hawai'i), I have seen firsthand the rapid growth of this sector and the funding opportunities that Hawai'i has, at times, missed out on.

The blue economy is one of the fastest growing sectors, encompassing maritime, logistics and supply chain, coastal resiliency, marine conservation, energy, blue foods or aquatic foods, biotechnology, ocean data, and outdoor recreation. [Hawai'i's blue economy](#) is already contributing over \$10 billion to our state's GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the largest U.S. island state located in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to support the Pacific Islands in attracting federal, philanthropic, and private investments to this region.

However, to realize the state's full potential, Hawai'i needs a more coordinated approach in marine affairs. This is exactly what SB 2907 helps to establish—one that aligns with statewide priorities, improves coordination on marine challenges, strengthens our readiness for opportunities, and provides quality jobs. Hawai'i's 2025

Ocean Resources Management Plan Evaluation and Refresh calls for stronger collaboration across state and county agencies, as well as with the private sector and other fields, including economists, realtors, tourism, and technology. We need dedicated local capacity whose job is to bring agencies, businesses, and communities together and move us from planning and reporting to developing and implementing solutions.

The impacts of the recent devastating storms and flooding remind us that we need better coordination and support for technology and tools that help us prepare for and respond to climate risks and extreme weather events. We have locally based innovators working on flood monitoring, sea level rise projections, stormwater management, and maritime operations, which are exactly the kinds of tools that could help emergency responders and communities in real time. However, without clear government structure and local funding and resources to support their work, it has been difficult for these innovators to justify building locally and growing their work here instead of operating in other states with established ocean clusters and government backing.

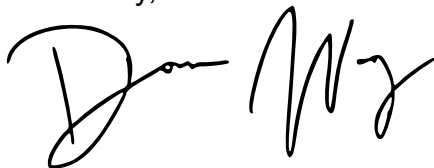
Other U.S. coastal states and global regions, including San Diego, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, New England, Florida, Norway, Iceland, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand, have already built their own ocean clusters to drive local leadership, economic growth, innovation, and workforce development. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. Pacific state is touching the Pacific Ocean without one, even though we have all the ingredients—from world-class marine science expertise, Indigenous knowledge to infrastructure like NELHA and strong local innovators—to help us succeed.

Over the past eight months, I've worked with HTDC and more than 80 organizations to build a coalition around Hawai'i's sustainable blue economy and ocean innovation. **Now** is the moment to match that momentum with the coordination capacity in SB 2907, so we can deliver community benefits in Hawai'i and the broader Pacific Islands and support the long-term economic resilience described in UHERO's recent report, [*Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?*](#).

By passing SB 2907, Hawai'i would be leaning into its natural strengths and serving as the Pacific model for a sustainable and regenerative blue economy. SB 2907 is a timely and necessary measure for Hawai'i's statewide needs. It will better prepare the state to address its own challenges and help grow what is already working in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 2907**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doreen Wong', written in a cursive style.

Doreen Wong
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor

SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 8:35:17 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Philip Davy | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

I am a biotech entrepreneur and educator based in Honolulu. I strongly support SB2907 HD1, establishing Hawaii as an ocean cluster and creating the Office of Marine Affairs—a strategic imperative for our islands’ economic future.

Economic Engine with Proven ROI

NOAA estimates Hawaii’s blue economy already contributes ~\$10 billion annually and supports 100,000 jobs. This legislation catalyzes the next phase of growth. Research shows sustainable blue food production alone delivers a 10-fold return on investment. We cannot leave this opportunity fragmented across agencies.

High-Value Job Creation & Innovation Leadership

SB2907 positions Hawaii to capture the \$3 trillion global blue economy by 2030—shifting toward innovation-driven sectors: marine biotech, ocean robotics, coastal resiliency, and advanced aquaculture. This creates high-wage employment competing with off-island opportunities, retaining our talented workforce in knowledge-intensive roles that cannot be outsourced.

Equity & Community Resilience

The Marine Affairs Task Force will ensure sustainable growth serves all communities, including Native Hawaiian coastal populations, strengthening cultural connections to ocean resources while building economic resilience against climate impacts and providing local food security alternatives.

Immediate Federal Funding Unlocked

Coordinated state leadership attracts EDA grants, NOAA partnerships, and USDA aquaculture funding currently underutilized. This bill removes bureaucratic silos, enabling us to compete for resources already flowing to other coastal states.

This is strategic positioning, not just policy—**Hawaii’s geographic advantage in the Pacific demands decisive action now.**

Mahalo for advancing this transformative measure.

Philip Davy

SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 8:41:05 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kahi Pacarro | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

SB 2907 gets Hawaii on the right path to recognizing our oceans as an integral component of our economy. It establishes a much-needed coordinated approach that recognizes the blue economy or also known as “ocean-based economy” as a state priority and supports the creation of future-ready jobs and opportunities for the state. Currently, Hawai‘i is the only U.S. state touching the Pacific Ocean without an ocean cluster, essentially a blue economy hub - this is a significant disadvantage for our state's competitiveness.

DATE: 2026-MAR-23

TO: Senators Lynn DeCoite, Glenn Wakai, Chris Lee, Lorraine Inouye, Donovan Dela Cruz, Sharon Moriwaki

FROM: Brennan Yamamoto

RE: SB2907, RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Aloha Senators Greggor Ilagan, Ikaika Hussey, Mark J. Hashem, Dee Morikawa, Chris Todd, Jenna Takenouchi, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the House Committees on Economic Development and Technology; Water and Land; Finance; and others to whom this testimony concerns. My name is Brennan Yamamoto and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2907.

I was born and raised on Oahu, graduating from Moanalua High school in 2009, and subsequently earning my mechanical engineering BS, MS, and PhD degrees from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa from 2009 to 2019. I then worked for the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i from 2020 to 2025 as a Robotics Engineer, developing multiple maritime systems and technologies in service of Hawai'i's local community and the United States Department of Defense. I am currently the Robotics Engineering Lead for HavocAI, the industry leader for collaborative autonomous systems in the maritime domain, where we partner closely with PacMar Technologies, a local multi-generational naval architecture and maritime technology company, to develop and test fleets of cutting-edge autonomous robotic systems in waters just south of Honolulu.

Hawai'i is surrounded by a diverse and easily accessible ocean environment, making it an ideal location to develop ocean-related technologies from multiple sectors, including, but not limited to: marine biology, renewable energy, environmental protection, aquaculture, naval architecture, and robotic/autonomous systems. Unfortunately, a lack of an effective, forward-thinking government agency specifically responsible for incubation of these emerging technologies has limited growth in these sectors. I can reference one prominent example from personal experience.

While working with the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i in 2022, I was involved in research toward detecting sea disposed munitions in littoral (shallow) waters; this problem directly affects Hawai'i residents and many coastal communities around the world. This process involves evaluating the effectiveness of cutting-edge sensing and robotic technologies in real-world environments seeded with inert, surrogate munitions. Hawai'i's exceptional diversity of littoral zones, year-around access to the ocean, proximity to world class maritime biology resources at the University of Hawai'i, and *real* public benefit from the solutions discovered in this research, made Hawai'i an excellent candidate for evaluating these emerging technologies. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic structures associated with permitting use of new technologies in the ocean simply do not exist, which dramatically delayed project timelines, reducing eligibility for future federal funding, and negating the benefits our persistent access to the ocean provides. A government agency tasked with stewardship and advocacy of ocean technologies can *proactively* support similar ocean technology development efforts while better preserving the environment and the safety of the people of Hawai'i.

I am a proud product of the State of Hawai'i, graduate of the UH system, and an advocate for diversifying opportunities for talented *kama'āina* to work in high technology at home in the islands. I believe that Hawai'i can and should be a pioneer in ocean technology, and that the efforts proposed in SB2907 are the first steps toward developing a thriving local ocean technology industry that will serve many future generations of engineers and scientists.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Brennan Yamamoto, PhD and Gizmologist

SB-2907-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 8:57:40 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/24/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Dylan Howell | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

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

My name is Dylan Howell, and I submit this testimony in **strong support of SB2907**.

Hawai‘i is the only U.S. state entirely surrounded by the ocean, yet our ocean-related efforts remain fragmented across agencies and programs. This limits our ability to scale impact, attract investment, create jobs and compete for federal funding.

SB2907 directly addresses this gap.

Establishing an Office of Marine Affairs is not about adding bureaucracy, it is about enabling coordination and execution. With alignment, Hawai‘i can better support innovation, grow ocean-based industries, strengthen workforce pathways, and align economic development with stewardship and cultural values.

The blue economy is not a single industry, it is a system. Without coordination, that system underperforms.

Hawai‘i has a clear opportunity to lead. SB2907 is a focused, high-leverage step to make that possible.

I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo,

Dylan Howell