

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, April 07, 2026

2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

Senate Bill No. 2907, SD1, HD2, Relating to Marine Affairs

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of the Governor supports the intent of Senate Bill No. 2907, SD1, HD2 and offers **comments**. 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.

While the Office of the Governor supports the establishment of an Office of Marine Affairs, we recommend that the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, rather than the Office of the Governor, be responsible for appointing the Marine Affairs Coordinator. As the administering agency, HTDC is best positioned to recruit and select a qualified candidate with the necessary subject matter expertise. We further recommend that compensation for the Coordinator be determined by HTDC, rather than the Office of the Governor, to ensure alignment with agency practices and responsibilities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony 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

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
FINANCE

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2907, SENATE DRAFT 1, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

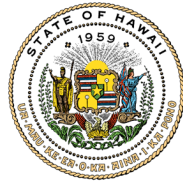
Senate Bill 2907, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 2, proposes to declare that the State is an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and Marine Affairs Task Force within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation; establishes and appropriates funds for the Marine Affairs Coordinator position; repeals the powers and duties of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism over marine affairs; and transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

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 206M-C(a)(1) do not supplant the strategies and priorities of the Department but rather integrate the Department's ongoing work.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2907, SD1, HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB2907, SD1, HD2. 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 (1) 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, HD2 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.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY WITH COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL 2907 SD1 HD2 HD2

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai
(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 4, 2026

10:31 am

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS** on **SB2907 SD1 HD2 HD2**, which declares the State an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Office of the Governor 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, with the important caveat that the appropriate member is the “chairperson of the board of trustees”.¹ 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.

SB2907 SD1 HD2 differs institutionally from prior blue economy proposals in that it situates the Office of Marine Affairs within the Office of the Governor rather than within a technology development corporation. This placement elevates marine affairs

¹ The current draft of the bill at page 17, line 6 references the chief executive officer which is not a recognized position under law; both the Hawaii Constitution, Art. 12, sec. 6, and HRS Chapter 10 reference an “Administrator” as the head of OHA.

coordination to the executive level and centralizes policy development across agencies including land and natural resources, harbors, agriculture, energy, and technology. From an institutional standpoint, this structure provides OHA with greater visibility and earlier engagement in statewide marine policy formation. The bill positions the task force not merely as an economic development advisory body, but as a coordinating mechanism capable of shaping executive recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.

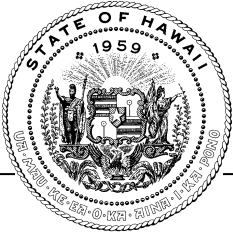
At the same time, the executive-level placement increases the significance of the task force's role and underscores the need for clear stewardship guardrails. While **SB2907 SD1 HD2** directs the Office to develop a statewide strategy that prioritizes sustainable use, conservation, and stewardship of 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 request the following amendments to the coordinator's enumerated duties at §187A-D(b)(1), page 11, line 10, 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."

Explicitly embedding a clear framework would ensure that executive-level marine coordination strengthens—not supplants—existing conservation safeguards.

SB2907 SD1 HD2 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 important measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-2846
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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
SB2907, SD1, HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) offers comments on SB2907, SD1, HD2 which declares the State as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation. Hawai'i's blue ocean economy has deep cultural roots and has historically represented an engine for economic prosperity into the present day.

OPSD finds that the Hawai'i State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identifies growing a "statewide blue ocean economy cluster" as an important objective for the State's economic prosperity. Hawai'i has already developed a substantial and expanding blue ocean economy with significant investments in aquaculture, shipbuilding, energy, recreation, marine research, and other areas. When combined with Hawai'i's location at the center of the Pacific Ocean and a rich cultural tradition of ocean stewardship and innovation, these pre-existing investments provide Hawai'i unique comparative advantages in the development of a blue ocean economy. Declaring the State an ocean cluster and establishing an Office of Marine Affairs serves to promote the implementation of CEDS and advance Hawai'i's blue ocean economy while preserving Hawai'i's natural and cultural ocean resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OUULU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
April 7, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2907, SD1, HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairperson Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports S.B. 2907, SD1, HD2, which:

- (1) Declares that the State is an ocean cluster;
- (2) Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force;
- (3) Establishes and appropriates funds for a Marine Affairs Coordinator position; and
- (4) Advances a coordinated framework for ocean-based economic development.

This measure represents a critical opportunity to integrate ocean-based economic development into Hawai'i's broader agricultural system and directly support the State's food security mandates, including increasing local production and expanding value-added food manufacturing.

In Hawai'i, agriculture must be understood as both land- and ocean-based. Aquaculture and marine food production are already embedded within the State's statutory definition of agriculture and represent one of the most scalable opportunities to increase local food supply. Establishing Hawai'i as an ocean

cluster provides the structure necessary to elevate marine food production as a core component of the State's food system.

A coordinated ocean economy framework supports the State's food mandates by:

- Expanding local food production through sustainable aquaculture and nearshore farming systems;
- Diversifying protein sources to reduce reliance on imports and improve food resilience;
- Supporting value-added processing opportunities aligned with the Food and Product Innovation Network (FPIN), including seafood processing, packaging, and export;
- Aligning research, permitting, and infrastructure investment to accelerate production timelines and reduce barriers for producers; and
- Creating workforce pathways that integrate agriculture, aquaculture, and food manufacturing sectors.

The establishment of an Office of Marine Affairs and supporting task force provides the institutional coordination necessary to align ocean-based food production with existing agricultural initiatives. This includes coordination with ADC's land and water infrastructure, food system planning, and value-added manufacturing strategies.

ADC emphasizes that food security in an island state cannot be achieved through land-based agriculture alone. Ocean-based production must be developed in parallel to meet the State's goals for doubling local food production, strengthening supply chain resilience, and ensuring access to nutritious, locally produced food.

In this context, positioning the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) is particularly important. HTDC's focus on innovation and commercialization will help bridge the gap between research and production by advancing scalable aquaculture technologies,

supporting entrepreneurs, and facilitating investment into marine-based food systems and related industries.

The coordinated framework established by this measure—supported by a dedicated coordinator position and appropriate funding will enable the State to better align marine resource management with food production goals, economic development strategies, and climate resilience planning.

S.B. 2907, SD1, HD2, is therefore not only an economic development initiative, but also a foundational component of Hawai'i's strategy to meet its food security mandates. By integrating ocean-based production into the broader agricultural system, the State can build a more resilient, diversified, and self-sustaining food economy.

For these reasons, ADC supports S.B. 2907, SD1, HD2, and respectfully recommends implementation strategies that ensure strong alignment between ocean-based economic development and the State's agricultural and food system priorities.

ADC's position may be further refined following review and discussion at its next Board meeting.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2907 SD1 HD2 Relating to Marine Affairs

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 2 (SB2907 SD1 HD2), 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 HD2 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 2. 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.

Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
2:00 pm
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1 HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 HD2 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.

We respectfully request that the bill be amended with the following:

1. To have the salary for the coordinator position also be set by HTDC instead of by Governor's office.
2. Edit the language in the task force section from "CEO of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs" to "Chairperson of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs..." since there is no CEO position at OHA.

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



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

House Committee on Finance: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and esteemed members of the Committee on Finance.

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
2:00 pm

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1 HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

SB-2907-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 10:19:46 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

Hawai‘i sits at the strategic center of the Indo-Pacific, where ocean activity, economic security, and national security converge. The establishment of a coordinated Hawai‘i Ocean Cluster is not only an economic development initiative—it is a strategic imperative. By formalizing a hub for ocean innovation, data, and technology, this bill positions Hawai‘i to lead in the emerging blue economy while strengthening resilience across commercial, environmental, and defense domains.

From maritime trade and port infrastructure to climate resilience and ocean-based intelligence, the challenges facing Hawai‘i—and the broader region—are increasingly complex and interconnected. Addressing them requires a coordinated approach that brings together government, industry, and academia. SB2907 creates the framework to do exactly that, enabling Hawai‘i to better anticipate risks, attract investment, and scale solutions that can be deployed locally and exported globally.

Importantly, this effort aligns directly with federal priorities across the Department of Defense, Department of Commerce, and international partners in the Indo-Pacific. Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to serve as a proving ground for dual-use technologies that support both economic growth and security objectives. A formalized ocean cluster will accelerate this work by creating a clear pathway for collaboration, funding, and long-term capability development.

At a time when global competition is intensifying across maritime and space domains, Hawai‘i has the opportunity to lead—not just participate—in shaping the future of ocean innovation. SB2907 ensures the state is organized to capture that opportunity.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2907.

Mahalo for your leadership and consideration.

Gtscientific LLC, an advanced precision CNC machine shop located in Honolulu serving industries in defense, astronomy, marine, aerospace, semiconductors, consumer hardware, etc, since 2017.

Statement of

Grant Takara

Owner

Gtscientific LLC

before the

House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of

SB2907 SD1 HD2

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance.

Gtscientific LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** SB2907 SD1 HD2, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

Hawaii is in a unique location with access to abundant marine resources. In 2025 Gtscientific LLC won around \$20,000 worth of marine based work, mostly in defense, and is eager to competitively and locally support more work in the sector. By having the office under HTDC it is anticipated that advanced manufacturing companies like Gtscientific LLC may be better connected with entities that will find their services of value in supporting their operations in Hawaii.

In summary, SB2907 SD1 HD2 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



AI.FISH

TO: Representative Todd, Chair, Committee on Finance
Representative Takenouchi, Vice Chair, Committee on Finance
FROM: Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish
RE: S.B. 2907, S.D. 1, H.D. 2 – Relating to Marine Affairs
HEARING DATE: April 7, 2026

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 HD2, relating to marine affairs.

For companies like Ai.Fish that are building commercially viable ocean technology right here in Hawai‘i, the institutional commitment in SB2907 SD1 HD2 is exactly what we need to grow and compete globally. Housing the Office of Marine Affairs 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 HD2 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. The investment this bill requires is modest relative to the federal and private capital it will help attract—coordination capacity is the multiplier that turns state dollars into outside funding.

In summary, Ai.Fish strongly supports SB2907 SD1 HD2 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



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**.



Testimony
in Support of
SB2907, SD1, HD2
before the
Committee on Finance

April 7, 2026
2:00 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and by Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907, SD1, HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Chris Todd,
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi,
Members of the Committee on Finance

On behalf of the Pacific International Center for High Technology Research (PICHTR), we strongly support SB2907, which formally recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establishes an Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force under the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and provide essential funding for capacity building to advance Hawai'i's ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. This bill is a critical investment in Hawai'i's economic future by strengthening our leadership in the blue economy, expanding economic opportunities across the Pacific through the development of ocean-focused technologies, and positioning our islands as a global model for regenerative and sustainable ocean innovation.

Our state has a responsibility to be a steward of the Pacific Ocean and encompasses the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the United States. Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments to sustain the local blue economy and address critical marine issues across the Pacific. 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 only state with a coast on the Pacific Ocean without a designation as an ocean cluster, this measure would help recognize the sustainable blue economy and the important initiatives to build economic resiliency for the state of Hawai'i. Advancing ocean technology and innovation directly aligns with HTDC's mission and leverages our geographical strengths, positioning Hawai'i as a strategic hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in the Pacific. This bill will support workforce development and create future-ready jobs and new businesses.

In summary, SB2907 is an essential measure to demonstrate Hawai'i's leadership in ocean technology and innovation while realizing the vision of a resilient economic future for our islands, and we encourage the adoption of SB2907.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith Matsumoto
Program Director
Pacific International Center for High Technology Research

Statement of
Gigi Dawn
Program Director
Thrive HI
before the
Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Tuesday, April 7, 2 PM
Time: 02:00 pm

Location: State Capitol, Videoconference, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
SB2907

(Note: HB1829 is consolidated into HB1615)>

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee

Chair **Chris Todd** and Vice Chair **Jenna Takenouchi** and Members of the Committee on Marine Affairs

Thrive HI 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.

ThriveHI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to diversifying Hawaii's economy by connecting local tech founders, investors, and talent. We strongly support this bill as it formalizes the **Ocean Cluster**, providing the strategic infrastructure and investment readiness programs our startup community needs to scale high-wage jobs in the marine sector. By centralizing leadership through a Marine Affairs Coordinator, the state reduces the regulatory hurdles that often stifle local innovation. Our work with **HTDC** has already reached hundreds of ecosystem participants, and this legislation is the necessary next step to ensure Hawaii's "Blue Economy" becomes a global leader.

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,

Gigi Dawn

Program Director, Thrive HI



NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAII AUTHORITY



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

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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

2:00 pm

State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2907, SD1, HD2 RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on SB2907, SD1, HD2 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



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 Finance

Tuesday, April 7th, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1 HD2
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee

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 HD2 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

April 6 2026

House Finance (FIN) Committee
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 global 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

Statement of
Michael Conathan
Co-Founder and Managing Director
Upwell Collaborative

AND

Ephraim Froehlich
Managing Partner
AKWA-DC

before the
Committee on Finance

Tuesday April 7, 2026
2:00 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee

Upwell Collaborative and AKWA-DC strongly SUPPORT 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 its 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.

Upwell Collaborative and AKWA-DC are consulting firms based in Portland, Maine and Juneau, Alaska respectively. We have been engaged in supporting the development of ocean clusters throughout the United States since 2021. During this time, we have worked with over two dozen ocean cluster organizations, criss-crossing the United States, from Alaska to Florida and Maine to California, including entities from the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. Pacific Ocean state without a formal ocean cluster or a dedicated program to promote its marine industries.

The World Bank has projected the global blue economy to grow at more than twice the rate of the mainstream economy in the coming years, including in industries where Hawai'i is ideally positioned to benefit. This growth is already underway in Hawai'i where its blue economy already contributes more than \$10 billion to the state's GDP and supports nearly 100,000 jobs. Marine business activity in Hawai'i has grown by 23 percent over the past decade. These numbers could be even larger with concerted, coordinated effort that can come from a dedicated ocean cluster.

Other states have already benefitted from such organization. The federal government has distributed over \$100 million in grant funding from the Economic Development Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other agencies over the course of the most recent three presidential administrations. States such as Alaska, California, Florida, Rhode Island, and Michigan have received significant investments as a result of their ocean cluster-based collaborations.

It is our understanding that [SB 2907](#) would strengthen Hawai'i's position to compete for federal and private sector funding by:

- Recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster (blue economy hub);
- Establishing an Office of Marine Affairs and a Marine Affairs Task Force;
- Providing capacity building support with a coordinator; and
- Improving interagency coordination of marine-related functions.

Hawai'i possesses all the requisite elements to make such an entity successful. Based on our experience working with leaders from the Hawai'i Ocean Innovation Hui and the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), this network is ideally suited to advancing Hawai'i's ocean technology and innovation ecosystem and maintaining a leadership role in the broader Pacific.

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,

Michael Conathan, Upwell Collaborative
Ephraim Froehlich, AKWA-DC

SB-2907-HD-2

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 7:31:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Forest Frizzell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support SB2907 SD1 HD2, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. By consolidating marine affairs functions under HTDC and creating a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator, this legislation streamlines governance and fosters a more integrated approach to innovation in ocean-related industries. This structure supports the growth of the blue economy by encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, facilitating research and commercialization, and leveraging HTDC's expertise in technology acceleration and economic development.

Mahalo,

Forest Frizzell



April 4th, 2026

Representative Chris Todd
Chair, House Finance Committee
State Capitol, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

In Support of **SB2907 RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly **support 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.

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.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Uchiyama
President & CEO

Dear Chairman Todd, Vice-chairwoman Takenouchi, 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 HD2) 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 Finance

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB 2907 RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I'm Doreen Wong, a climate, infrastructure, and sustainability professional, focusing on the sustainable blue economy, ocean technology and innovation. I submit this testimony in my personal capacity. I respectfully 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 Task Force, a dedicated coordinator position, and support for capacity building.

My professional experience spans 14 years at the intersection of technology innovation, policy, and finance across global, regional, and local levels. I have advised 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 help strengthen the state's blue economy, 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 the growth of this sector firsthand, as well as Hawai'i's tremendous potential and the opportunities that the state has risked missing without stronger statewide coordination.

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, strategically located in the Pacific and within the nation's second-largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i has a unique role to play in ocean stewardship, innovation, and economic opportunity across the Pacific.

To realize this potential, Hawai'i needs a more coordinated approach. SB 2907 would provide that structure by improving statewide coordination on ocean and coastal challenges, strengthening Hawai'i's ability to compete for federal, philanthropic, and private investment, preparing for future workforce needs, and delivering community benefits. This is consistent with the 2025 Ocean Resources Management Plan

Evaluation and Refresh, which calls for stronger collaboration across state and county agencies and with private sector partners, including economists, industry, and technology leaders. Hawai'i needs dedicated local capacity to convene agencies, businesses, and communities and move from planning and reporting to implementation.

The devastating impacts of the recent Kona low storms and flooding remind us that this effort is especially urgent as Hawai'i faces increasing coastal and climate risks. We need better coordination, disaster preparedness, and support for innovative technologies and tools in areas such as flood monitoring, sea level rise, stormwater management, and maritime systems. Hawai'i already has local innovators working in these areas. However, without clear and coordinated statewide support, it can be difficult for these innovators to remain in Hawai'i and deploy their solutions locally.

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 opportunities, innovation, and workforce development. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. state touching the Pacific Ocean without such structure, even though we have the essential ingredients to succeed, including world-class marine science expertise, Indigenous knowledge and values, strategic infrastructure such as NELHA, and a growing ecosystem of innovators.

Over the past eight months, I have participated in efforts with HTDC and more than 80 partner organizations to help build a coalition around Hawai'i's sustainable blue economy, ocean technology and innovation. SB 2907 is a timely opportunity. With a modest upfront investment of the state's resources, Hawai'i can move from planning to implementation of an initiative that supports addressing ocean and coastal challenges.

I also respectfully suggest the following amendments to the bill:

- Allow Task Force members to designate representatives from their agencies or organizations to serve on their behalf; and
- Clarify that the Office of Marine Affairs and the Marine Affairs Task Force are intended to operate in a complementary, advisory, and coordinating capacity and not to supplant, duplicate, or conflict with the statutory authority and responsibilities of existing state and county agencies.

SB 2907 is a timely and necessary measure that builds on Hawai'i's natural strengths and helps position the state as a leader in the blue economy in the Pacific.

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

Sincerely,



Doreen Wong



DATE: 4/6/2026

TO: Rep. Chris Todd
Chair on Committee on Finance

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi
Vice Chair on Committee on Finance

FROM: Hohonu

RE: **SB 2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs**
HEARING DATE: 4/7/2026, 2pm

Dear Chair Todd and Vice Chair Takenouchi,

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 Hawaii Technology Development Corporation, 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

DATE: 2026-APR-06

TO: Senators Chris Todd and Jenna Takenouchi

FROM: Brennan Yamamoto

RE: SB 2907, SD1, HD2, RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Aloha Senators Chris Todd and Jenna Takenouchi, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the House Committee on 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 robotic sensing technologies in real-world environments seeded with inert munition suorgates. 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 will *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

DATE: April 6, 2026

TO: **Representative Todd (FIN Chair), Representative Takenouchi (Vice Chair)**

FROM: George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

RE: **S.B. 2907, H.D. 2 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

PUBLIC DECISION DATE: Apr 7, 2026

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee:

I submit this testimony in **support of Senate Bill 2907, HD. 2**, 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, H.D. 2 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

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