



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY WITH COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL 2907 SD1

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Hawai'i State Capitol

Malaki 18, 2026

8:30 am

Lumi 423

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS** on **SB2907 SD1**, 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. 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 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 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 to protect marine resources. While **SB2907 SD1** 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.

Additionally, as a procedural matter, OHA notes that the language for the OHA representative (page 9 lines 11-12) 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 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 | 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
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

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

Senate Bill 2907, Senate Draft 1 proposes to declare that the State is an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Governor's Office 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 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.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

8:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 and Videoconference

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

Chair Illagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development & Tourism:

The Office of the Governor supports the intent of Senate Bill No. 2907, SD1 and offers **comments**. This bill declares the State an ocean cluster; establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Governor's Office; creates and funds a Marine Affairs Coordinator position; 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 intent of establishing an Office of Marine Affairs, we do not support housing the new office within the Governor's Office. We believe the Office of Marine Affairs would be more effectively placed within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, which has the operational expertise and experience needed to successfully launch and sustain an innovation-driven entity of this nature. Additionally, compensation for the Marine Affairs Coordinator should be determined by the department or agency in which the position is housed, rather than by the Office of the Governor.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony 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 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TECHNOLOGY
March 18, 2026
8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2907, SD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairperson Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) supports S.B. 2907, SD1, which would designate Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establish an Office of Marine Affairs within the Office of the Governor for administrative purposes. This includes the creation of a Marine Affairs Coordinator, annual reporting, and the transfer of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs into the new office.

Hawai'i's geography makes the ocean economy foundational—not ancillary—to statewide resilience, workforce development, and economic diversification. A formal “ocean cluster” provides a practical governance framework to coordinate applied research, commercialization, permitting alignment, workforce pathways, and industry engagement across agencies, the University of Hawai'i, and private sector partners. S.B. 2907, SD1, establishes a clear point of coordination within the Office of the Governor while maintaining accountability through required reporting and structured oversight.

Other jurisdictions demonstrate the effectiveness of cluster-based approaches to accelerate collaboration and scale “blue tech” and sustainable aquaculture:

- **San Diego (Port-led Blue Economy Incubator):** Leveraged R&D funding and direct support for aquaculture and blue tech pilot projects demonstrate how incubator/cluster approaches can translate innovation into investable projects.
- **Washington State (maritime cluster/economy):** Supporting 174,300 jobs, \$14.4B in labor income, and \$45.9B in business revenues (2022), Washington underscores how coordinated maritime and ocean-economy strategies can drive jobs and scale.
- **Norway (ocean industries + aquaculture):** Norway’s seafood sector reached NOK 181.5B in exports in 2025, illustrating the economic potential of aligned innovation, production, and market access.
- **Iceland (cluster model + fisheries value):** Iceland’s ocean cluster connects seafood, innovation, and entrepreneurship while maintaining national fisheries exports at ~ISK 347B in 2024—evidence of the value in coordinated ocean-based value chains.

ADC notes that aquaculture is explicitly included within Hawai‘i’s statutory definition of “agriculture” under HRS §163D-2. This reinforces that aquaculture and marine food production are not “new” to the State’s agricultural development mandate—they are a core component of it. A statewide blue economy ocean cluster complements ADC’s responsibilities and strengthens Hawai‘i’s ability to coordinate food security, applied research, innovation, workforce development, and ocean-resource stewardship across agencies and partners.

ADC also recommends that S.B. 2907 includes explicit reference to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT) statutes from the last draft. Incorporating DBEDT’s economic analysis, data reporting, and

policy alignment authority would provide critical tools to support cluster evaluation, investment readiness, and outcome measurement. Coordination with DBEDT will ensure that ocean cluster strategies are evidence-based, market-responsive, and aligned with broader statewide economic development priorities, complementing ADC's operational and agricultural expertise.

S.B. 2907, SD1, is a practical and timely step to position Hawai'i for coordinated, investable growth in the blue economy—supporting innovation, high-quality jobs, food security, and sustainable ocean stewardship through an identifiable cluster strategy and a centralized point of coordination within the Office of the Governor.

For these reasons, ADC strongly supports S.B. 2907, SD1.

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 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026
8:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 423**

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

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2907, SD1. 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, SB 2907, SD1 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.



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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Wednesday, March 18, 2026
8:30 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2907, SD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

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

Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
8:30 am
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, 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 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.

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



SB-2907-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 8:39:54 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/18/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition **SUPPORTS** this bill. The blue economy should protect ocean resources, particularly coral reefs, and facilitate elimination of cesspools and other sources of pollution.



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

Statement of
Gregory Wong
Co-Founder and COO
WaiHome LLC
before the

Senate Committee Economic Development and Technology

Wednesday, March 18th, 2026
8:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907 SD1
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means.

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 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 COO
WaiHome LLC



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





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

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

before the

Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Regarding SB2907:
Relating to Marine Affairs

Testimony in Support

Date: March 16, 2026

To:

Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
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 ECD Committee on
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 8:30 AM

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

Testimony in Support

Date: March 16, 2026

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

To:

Committee on Economic Development and Technology:

Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
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





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 to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology (ECD)

**Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 8:30AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference**

RE: SB2907 SD1 Relating to Marine Affairs

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, 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 (SB2907 SD1), which declares that the State is an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Governor's Office 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. Appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Marine Affairs Coordinator position.

SB2907 SD1 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. 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.



Statement of
Hermann Kugeler
Vice President of Business Development
Makai Ocean Engineering, Inc.

before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

8:30 am

In consideration of

SB2907

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee

Makai Ocean Engineering, Inc. (Makai) **SUPPORTS SB2907.**

Makai is a locally owned engineering and technology company that has been based in Hawaii for over 50 years. Makai supports this measure because Hawaii is uniquely positioned to lead in ocean and marine technology, and a stronger, more coordinated state focus on marine affairs can help grow the State's blue economy in a way that supports innovation, job creation, and long-term economic development. The bill would declare Hawaii an ocean cluster and establish an Office of Marine Affairs to help advance a statewide strategy for marine affairs, ocean technology, and innovation.

Makai believes Hawaii has a real opportunity to build on its existing strengths in ocean engineering, marine science, energy, aquaculture, maritime industries, and coastal resilience. Better coordination across state agencies, industry, and the University of Hawaii can help remove barriers to growth and support new opportunities for local companies working in these sectors. Makai especially supports the bill's focus on technology-enabled marine industries, commercialization, workforce needs, and pursuing public and private investment to strengthen Hawaii's ocean economy.

As a Hawaii company working in marine technology and ocean engineering, Makai sees firsthand the value of stronger alignment between industry, research institutions, and government. Establishing a dedicated Office of Marine Affairs and coordinator can help ensure these efforts are more consistent, strategic, and action-oriented across the State.

For these reasons, Makai Ocean Engineering supports SB2907 and respectfully asks the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

DATE: March 16, 2026

TO: **Representative Ilagan (ECD Chair), Representative Hussey (ECD 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 18, 2026**

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development and Technology:

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

Statement of
Doreen Wong
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor
before the
Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB 2907 RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development and Technology Committee,

My name is Doreen Wong, and I am a sustainable blue economy and ocean technology and innovation professional. 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, to help drive execution and build local capacity. This measure is a timely investment in Hawai'i's long-term economic resilience, strengthening statewide coordination so Hawai'i can compete for investment, 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 HTDC and the University of Hawai'i to develop the local 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 over the years 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 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 maintain our competitive edge and realize our full potential, Hawai'i needs a more coordinated approach. This is exactly what SB 2907 helps to establish—one that aligns with statewide priorities, improves our readiness to attract investment, and

turns local ideas into real projects and quality jobs. Hawai'i's 2025 Ocean Resources Management Plan Evaluation and Refresh (2025 ORMP Evaluation & Refresh) reinforces this by calling for stronger collaboration not only across State and county agencies, but also across the private sector and other fields, including economists, realtors, tourism, and technology. More simply, this means we need dedicated local capacity whose job is to bring agencies, businesses, and communities together, to tackle ocean and coastal challenges, and move us from planning to delivering.

The urgency of this initiative is clear. The recent devastating storm and flooding reminded us that we need this coordination, technology and tools we rely on to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events. Better integration of ocean, coastal, and weather information can help protect lives, homes, and critical infrastructure. Around the world, ocean clusters are using this kind of multi-sector coordination, bringing together science, technology, emergency management, infrastructure, business, industry, and community voices to tackle the same challenges we are facing as a state.

Other U.S. coastal states and global regions, such as San Diego, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, New England, Florida, Norway, Iceland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and more, have successfully leveraged ocean clusters to drive local leadership coordination, economic growth, innovation, and workforce development. Hawai'i is currently the only U.S. Pacific state touching the Pacific Ocean without a designated ocean cluster, risking missed opportunities for leadership, funding, and support.

Over the eight months, I've participated in coalition-building efforts with more than 80 organizations focused on strengthening Hawai'i's economic future through the sustainable blue economy and ocean technology and innovation. **Now** is the moment to match that momentum with the coordination capacity outlined in SB 2907, so can deliver tangible benefits for communities in Hawai'i and the broader Pacific Island region and support the long-term economic resilience that is needed, discussed in UHERO's most recent report, [*Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?*](#).

By passing SB 2907, Hawai'i can lean into its natural strengths and serve as a global model for the Pacific Islands in the sustainable and regenerative blue economy. SB 2907 is a timely and necessary measure to recognize Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy and to realize its full potential as a leader in marine industries and innovation.

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



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

March 17 2026

Committee on Economic Development & Technology

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



DATE: 3/17/2026

TO: Rep. Greggor Ilagan
Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Rep. Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology

FROM: Hohonu

RE: **SB 2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs**
HEARING DATE: 3/18/2026

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology,

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

SB-2907-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:16:08 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/18/2026 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2907

Hearing Date: March 18, 2026 – 8:30 AM HT

Submitted by: Privateer

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

Privateer respectfully submits strong support for SB2907, establishing Hawai‘i as an ocean innovation cluster and creating an Office of Marine Affairs.

At a time when Hawai‘i is responding to storm impacts, coastal vulnerability, and increasing maritime complexity, this legislation is both timely and necessary.

Hawai‘i sits at the center of the Indo-Pacific and faces growing demand for:

- Real-time maritime awareness
- Coastal resilience and disaster response
- Sustainable ocean economy development

Privateer operates at the intersection of space, maritime, and data analytics, and we see a clear need for what we define as:

Ocean Intelligence Infrastructure — the ability to monitor, understand, and respond to maritime activity in real time.

SB2907 enables the coordination required to scale these capabilities by bringing together government, industry, academia, and local communities.

By establishing an ocean cluster and Office of Marine Affairs, Hawai‘i can:

- Strengthen coordination across stakeholders
- Attract federal and private investment

- Accelerate deployment of solutions for both public safety and economic development

This effort positions Hawai‘i as a global leader in ocean innovation and resilience.

Hawai‘i has the opportunity to lead the world in how we understand and protect the ocean—not just as a natural resource, but as critical infrastructure. SB2907 is how we begin building that future.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Alana Marsili
Privateer Space Inc.



AI.FISH

TO: Representative Ilagan, Chair, Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Representative Hussey, Vice Chair, Committee on Economic Development & Technology
FROM: Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish
RE: S.B. 2907, SD1 – Relating to Marine Affairs
HEARING DATE: March 18, 2026

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, 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, relating to marine affairs.

SB2907 SD1 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 within the Governor’s Office. 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.

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. This bill 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 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 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-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 8:13:05 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/18/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committeemembers,

Our island state relies on the health of the ocean as the basis of our welfare and prosperity. Utilizing this resource sustainably should be a priority for us. I urge the committee to continue supporting this legislation!

SB-2907-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 5:24:19 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/18/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Curtis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Statement of

Mike Curtis

President and Principal Consultant - Curtis Consulting LLC

before the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday March 18, 2026 8:30am

Conference Room 423 - State Capitol

In consideration of SB 2907, SD1 (SSCR2970) RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Illagan and Vice Chair Hussey and Members of the Committee on COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

I, Mike Curtis, 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.

I have been a member of Hawaii's innovative industries for more than 20 years, advising, mentoring and investing in startup companies to diversify and grow our economy. This bill furthers that important work.

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,

Mike Curtis

President & Principal Consultant

Curtis Consulting LLC

Statement of
Kelsey Kim
Embedded Software Engineer
Havoc AI
before the
Committee on Finance

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol

In consideration of
SB2907

Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Hussey and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology,

I submit this testimony on behalf of Havoc AI in support of Senate bill 2907. Havoc AI is a maritime technology company focused on creating various classes of autonomous surface vessels (ASV).

In 2025, Havoc AI began development in Hawaii, conducting testing for newly developed ASVs and conducting on-water demonstrations for potential customers and partners. These Hawaii demonstrations are crucial to establishing relationships with international customers and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Successful demonstrations in 2025 have led to opportunities allowing Havoc AI to expand operations in Hawaii, providing job opportunities for local engineers, operations and logistics specialists, and business professionals. Continued support from HTDC and the State of Hawaii could allow Havoc AI to grow manufacturing, development, and testing operations, stimulate Hawaii's economy through ocean technology, and most importantly, continue creating high-paying and engaging job opportunities for engineers in Hawaii.

Thank you so much for your consideration and support of ocean technology in Hawaii!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Kim

Embedded Software Engineer, Havoc AI

Dear Chairman Ilagan, Vice-chairman Hussey, 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) 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.

DATE: 2026-MAR-17

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 Lynn DeCoite, Glenn Wakai, Chris Lee, Lorraine Inouye, Donovan Dela Cruz, Sharon Moriwaki, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Senate Committees on Economic Development and Tourism; Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts; Ways and Means; 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-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:20:14 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/18/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan Howell	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Dylan Howell, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB2907, relating to marine affairs.

SB2907 is an important and forward-looking measure that would formally recognize Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster, establish an Office of Marine Affairs, create a Marine Affairs Task Force, and fund a Marine Affairs Coordinator position to help align strategy and execution across the State’s blue economy priorities.

This bill is especially significant because Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to lead in ocean and aquatic sectors. Our island geography, cultural heritage, Native Hawaiian knowledge, strategic Pacific location, research assets, and emerging marine industries together make Hawai‘i one of the most compelling places in the world to build a regenerative and innovation-driven blue economy. SB2907 appropriately recognizes that reality and begins to organize state support around it.

A central challenge in growing Hawai‘i’s blue economy is fragmentation. Many strong efforts already exist across aquaculture, ocean technology, marine energy, resilience, education, conservation, and commercialization, but they are often disconnected across agencies and initiatives. Establishing a clearer home for marine affairs can improve coordination, sharpen strategic priorities, and make Hawai‘i more effective in attracting investment, partnerships, federal funding, and talent.

SB2907 also matters because the blue economy is not only about economic growth. Done well, it can support stewardship, food security, local jobs, innovation, and cultural continuity at the same time. The bill’s framing around culture, stewardship, economic opportunity, and innovation is one of its strengths.

For Hawai‘i to lead, the State needs visible commitment, institutional coordination, and a structure that can carry marine affairs forward consistently. SB2907 is a strong step in that direction.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2907.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Dylan Howell