

**STATE OF HAWAI‘I
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Monday, February 9, 2026
3:05 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

in consideration of
SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai and Members of the Committees,

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) offers **comments** on SB2907, 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.



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 AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Monday, February 9, 2026
03:05 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on SB2907, 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—such as HB1615/SB3167 and SB2374—address related aspects of blue economy development. Coordinating the efforts envisioned across these bills would be beneficial to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
and
Senate Committee of Economic Development and Tourism

Monday, February 9, 2026
3:05 pm
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB 2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairs Gabbard and Decoite, Vice Chairs Richards III and Wakai, and Members of the Committees.

HTDC strongly supports SB2907, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as a leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a distinct focus on developing the space and ocean sectors. By centralizing marine affairs functions and creating a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator, SB2907 will enhance coordination, streamline policy implementation, and foster innovation in the blue economy.

Hawai'i's ocean sector represents a significant opportunity for economic diversification and technological advancement. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. blue economy contributed over \$511 billion to the national GDP in 2023, supporting 2.6 million jobs. Hawai'i, with its unique geographic and cultural assets, is well positioned to capture a larger share of this growth through targeted investment and coordination. Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC leverages our expertise in technology development, innovation accelerator programs, and research and development to drive commercialization and sustainable growth in marine industries.

The transfer of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to HTDC will consolidate expertise and resources, reducing administrative duplication and ensuring that marine policy is informed by both scientific research and economic development best practices. The annual reporting requirement will promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in marine policy, supporting data-driven decision-making and responsive governance.

Moreover, the appropriation for a full-time Marine Affairs Coordinator is a strategic investment. This position will serve as a vital link between government, industry, academia, and community stakeholders, helping to accelerate projects in renewable energy technology, ocean innovation, and advanced



Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation

521 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste 255
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

808-539-3806
www.htdc.org

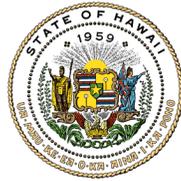
manufacturing. These efforts are essential for Hawai'i to remain competitive in the global blue economy and to achieve sustainable economic development.

In summary, SB2907 will strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in ocean innovation, support the growth of high-value jobs, and advance the state's economic resilience. HTDC urges swift passage of this bill to realize the full potential of Hawai'i's ocean sector.



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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026
3:05 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

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

Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chair Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2907. 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 the 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 provides a coherent framework within which restorative and commercial aquaculture initiatives can be aligned with broader

Testimony of Sharon Hurd
February 9, 2026
Page 2 of 2

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.

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
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

February 9, 2026
3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

SENATE BILL NO. 2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairpersons DeCoite and Gabbard, Vice Chair Wakai and Richards, and
Members of the Committees:

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) **supports** S.B. 2907, which would designate Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establish an Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes, including 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" model provides a practical framework to coordinate innovation, commercialization, permitting alignment, workforce pipelines, and applied research across agencies, UH, and industry. S.B. 2907 provides a targeted governance structure to do that through HTDC while maintaining clear lines of accountability through required reporting.

Other jurisdictions have used cluster-based approaches to accelerate collaboration and scale “blue tech” and sustainable aquaculture:

- **San Diego (Port-led Blue Economy Incubator):** The Port of San Diego’s Blue Economy Incubator has documented leveraged R&D funding and direct support for aquaculture and blue tech pilot projects, demonstrating how an incubator/cluster approach can translate innovation into investable projects.
- **Washington State (maritime cluster/economy):** Washington’s maritime sector is a large, measurable economic engine—supporting **174,300 jobs**, **\$14.4B** in labor income, and **\$45.9B** in business revenues (2022), underscoring how coordinated maritime and ocean-economy strategies can drive scale and jobs.
- **Norway (ocean industries + aquaculture at scale):** Norway’s seafood sector alone reached a **record export value of NOK 181.5B in 2025**, illustrating the economic potential of ocean-industry ecosystems when innovation, production, and market access are aligned.
- **Iceland (cluster model + fisheries value):** Iceland’s “ocean cluster” approach has been recognized as a deliberate strategy to connect seafood, innovation, and entrepreneurship, while national fisheries export value remained substantial at **~ISK 347B in 2024**—evidence of the scale at stake in ocean-based value chains.

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

S.B. 2907 is a practical step to position Hawai‘i for coordinated, investable growth in the blue economy—supporting innovation, jobs, and ocean stewardship

SENATE BILL NO. 2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS
Page 3 of 3

through an identifiable cluster strategy and a clear point of coordination within HTDC. For these reasons, ADC respectfully urges the Committee to PASS S.B. 2907.

SB-2907

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:42:12 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony John Escasa	Testifying for Pacific Impact Zone	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
PROVIDING COMMENTS ON SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

Pacific Impact Zone respectfully submits these comments on SB2907, which declares the State as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC).

As an organization actively working to establish shared-use advanced manufacturing capacity in Hawai‘i, with a focus on supporting ocean technology, maritime, and dual-use innovation, we view SB2907 as a meaningful step toward aligning policy, coordination, and execution across the State’s marine and technology ecosystems.

SB2907 recognizes that Hawai‘i’s blue economy is no longer defined solely by traditional marine industries, but increasingly shaped by technology-enabled capabilities such as autonomous maritime systems, marine biotechnology, ocean data platforms, port and harbor modernization, and maritime cybersecurity. These sectors depend not only on research and policy alignment, but on access to manufacturing, prototyping, testing, and commercialization infrastructure. Formalizing Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and consolidating marine affairs coordination within HTDC creates an opportunity to better connect innovation to real-world deployment .

From an implementation perspective, the creation of the Office of Marine Affairs and the Marine Affairs Coordinator role has the potential to improve coherence across agencies, reduce fragmentation, and provide a clearer entry point for industry partners. For emerging ocean technology companies, particularly small businesses, the lack of coordinated pathways across permitting, infrastructure, workforce, and commercialization remains a significant barrier. A centralized coordinating function can help translate strategy into actionable outcomes.

As Pacific Impact Zone works closely with ocean technology companies, maritime innovators, and defense-adjacent manufacturers, we see firsthand the importance of aligning marine affairs strategy with advanced manufacturing capability. Ocean innovation does not stop at research or pilot projects. It requires facilities, standards, supply chains, and workforce readiness to move

from concept to production. Locating the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC creates the potential to better integrate marine innovation with existing technology development tools, including SBIR support, accelerators, public-private partnerships, and manufacturing-focused initiatives.

At the same time, successful implementation of SB2907 will depend on clarity of scope and sustained resourcing. The Office of Marine Affairs is assigned a broad mandate that spans strategy development, interagency coordination, funding pursuit, policy recommendations, and industry support. To avoid dilution of impact, it will be important to maintain clear roles, prioritize execution, and ensure close coordination with existing HTDC programs rather than creating parallel processes.

Ongoing engagement with industry operators, manufacturers, researchers, and community stakeholders will also be critical. Hawai'i's ocean cluster will only succeed if policy, infrastructure, and innovation efforts are grounded in real market needs and informed by those actively building and deploying technology in the marine environment.

In summary, SB2907 establishes a strong structural foundation for recognizing and advancing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster. With disciplined implementation and close alignment between marine affairs, technology development, and manufacturing execution, this framework can support sustainable economic growth, strengthen ocean innovation, and reinforce Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy. Pacific Impact Zone appreciates the Legislature's intent and offers these comments in support of the measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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

- **Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:** Chair Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai, and esteemed members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
- **Committee on Agriculture and Environment:** Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III and esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Monday February 9, 2026
2:30-4:00 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907

**Note: HB1829 is consolidated into HB1615
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

Statement of
Doreen Wong
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor
before the
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
and the
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Monday, February 9, 2026
3:05 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair Gabbard and Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment, and

Chair DeCoite and Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism,

I, Doreen Wong, an ocean technology and innovation professional, 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 state's GDP and supports 100,000 jobs, with marine business activity growing 23% in the past decade. As the nation's largest island state in the Pacific and ocean steward in the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to innovate and attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments. By leveraging technology and innovation, we can better 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's 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 much-needed collaboration across sectors.

I am a blue economy, ocean technology and innovation professional with experience working 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 our 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 ocean innovation and investment opportunities worldwide.

SB2907 will enable Hawai'i to take a more coordinated, systems-level approach to addressing statewide marine challenges and opportunities. By streamlining efforts, supporting technology and innovation, and building public-private partnerships, this bill strengthens our ecosystem and enhances our disaster preparedness and economic resilience. The designation of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster will also help us to remain competitive, attract investments, and create jobs.

Similar initiatives in regions, such as San Diego, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, New England, Florida, Norway, Iceland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and more, have shown that coordinated ocean clusters drive innovation, economic growth, and workforce development. Every U.S. state in the Pacific West already has some policy in place to support this. The moment for Hawai'i is now, considering UHERO's recent economic report: [*Beyond the Price of Paradise: Is Hawai'i Being Left Behind?*](#). By passing SB2907, Hawai'i can build on its natural strengths and be a model for the Pacific Islands in ocean technology and innovation, while highlighting its leadership in Indigenous knowledge and values.

I would also recommend that the committees consider amending **SB2907** with components from **SB3167** and **SB2374**. The governance framework proposed in **SB2907** should be supported by the technical strategy goals of **SB3167** and **SB2374**. Separate strategies and task forces risk duplicating efforts and becoming another "report on the shelf". By consolidating the appropriate components of these bills into one bill focused on the blue economy will help the State create a more cohesive and supportive system for high-level strategy and operational coordination to unlock economic opportunities for the state.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doreen Wong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doreen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wong".

Doreen Wong
Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor
Contributing Member, 1000 Ocean Startups



AI.FISH

TO: Chair DeCoite, Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Richards, and Members
FROM: Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish
RE: SB2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs

Chairs Decoite, Gabbard, Vice Chairs Wakai and Richards, and Members of the Committee,

I am Jimmy Freese, CEO of Ai.Fish, a Hawai‘i-based ocean technology company. I am writing in strong support of SB2907, relating to Marine Affairs.

This bill takes two critical steps: it formally recognizes Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and creates a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator under HTDC. For companies like Ai.Fish, this kind of focused coordination is essential.

Over seven years, HTDC has been a critical partner for Ai.Fish—from funding and commercialization support to helping us compete for federal funding. A dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator will strengthen this support and help Hawai‘i’s ocean technology companies scale, stay headquartered here, and contribute to a coordinated statewide blue economy strategy.

Ai.Fish strongly supports SB2907. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Freese

CEO and Co-Founder

Ai.Fish



Noah Pentelovitch
Head of Hardware
Hohonu
before the
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism, Committee on Agriculture
and Environment

Monday, February 9th 2026
3:05pm
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference, State Capitol

In consideration of
SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairs Gabbard and Decoite, and Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai and Members of the Committees on Economic Development, Tourism and Agriculture and Environment

Hohonu 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.

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.

Establishing an office of marine affairs with a marine affairs task force and declaring the state an ocean cluster 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. Establishing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, with a marine affairs task force acting as a coordinator to address these problems across the cluster, we have a better chance at solving them.

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: February 9, 2026

TO: **Senator Lynn DeCoite & Senator Mike Gabbard**
Chairs, EDT/AEN

Senator Glenn Wakai & Senator Herbert "Tim" Richards
Vice Chairs, EDT/AEN

FROM: Pacific Economics

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

HEARING DATE: Monday, February 9, 2026, at 3:05 PM
Conference Room: 224

Dear Chair DeCoite, Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Joint EDT/AEN Committee:

We submit this testimony on behalf of Pacific Economics in **strong support of Senate Bill 2907**, which advocates for the recognition of Hawai'i as an "ocean cluster" and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs.

Pacific Economics is a strategic advisory firm with a goal to see Hawai'i and the broader Pacific become a global leader in sustainable economic growth. We use data to make well-calculated decisions, and the data in this bill makes a clear case: Hawai'i's Blue Economy already supports nearly [100,000 jobs and generates \\$9.2 billion in GDP](#) for our state. We strongly believe that formally recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster is the only way to scale these numbers and ensure a prosperous future.

Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs facilitates the unification of Hawai'i's fragmented marine sectors into a high-performing force. Designating Hawai'i as an ocean cluster leverages our geography and Kanaka 'Ōiwi stewardship to attract investment and drive maritime innovation. Because our challenges parallel those of the broader Pacific, Hawai'i's success serves as a blueprint for transitioning island economies into a globally recognized hub for marine technology.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Pacific Economics

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. B.", positioned below the typed name "Pacific Economics".



Blue Startups
55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the EDT/AEN committees on
Monday, February 9, 2026 at 3:05 PM

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

Testimony in Support

Date: February 7, 2026

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

To:

Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:

Chair Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai,
and esteemed members of the Committee

Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III
and esteemed members of the Committee

Aloha,

My name is Chenoa Farnsworth, and I am the Managing Director at Blue Startups. Thank you 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 with mentorship, product validation, investor introductions, and access to early capital. Blue Startups is also launching an **Ocean Tech DeepDive**, a **two-week intensive** designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

SB2907 declares that Hawai‘i is an **ocean cluster**. It establishes an **Office of Marine Affairs** within the **Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)** and creates a **Marine Affairs Coordinator** position.

Hawai'i's ocean and coastal strengths are real. They touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism. **SB2907** creates a clear home for that coordination and a dedicated point of accountability.

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.

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





Hawai'i Angels
335 Merchant Street, Suite #516
Honolulu, HI 96808

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

before the

Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:
and **Committee on Agriculture and Environment**

Regarding SB2907:
Relating to Marine Affairs

Testimony in Support

Date: February 7, 2026

To:

Chair Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai,
and esteemed members of the Committee on EDT

Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III
and esteemed members of the Committee on AEN

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 **Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)** to establish the **Office of Marine Affairs and a Coordinator** within HTDC 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 Committees to **pass SB2907** with a recommendation of **support** and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,



Alexi Drouin
Assistant Director
Hawai'i Angels





Statement of
Veronica Rocha, CEO
Essential Leap, LLC
before the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**Monday, February 9, 2026
3:05 PM**

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference, State Capitol

In consideration of
SB2907

RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair Senator Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment, and the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism, respectively,

Essential Leap is a Honolulu based consultancy that helps to accelerate cleantech adoption through results-driven, end-to-end market development.

I support SB2907 and respectfully urge the Committee to advance this important legislation. By formally establishing an Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation and creating a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator position, SB2907 will ensure that our state has the organizational structure and leadership to develop and implement strategic policies related to marine resource management, ocean innovation, climate resilience, and the growing blue economy. This bill recognizes the essential role that the marine environment plays in Hawaii's culture, economy, and sustainability.

I support this bill because Hawaii's unique geographic and economic context demands focused coordination and expert leadership on marine issues. Our islands' marine ecosystems provide critical habitat, support our state's economy, and connect us culturally and strategically to the Pacific region. However, the complex challenges of ocean conservation, climate change impacts, sustainable aquaculture, and coastal community resilience require sustained attention and integrated policymaking. SB2907 enables the state to centralize marine affairs functions, improve planning and reporting to the Legislature and the Governor, and elevate Hawaii as a leader in the national and global blue economy. This investment will help protect our natural resources, support innovation and economic development in ocean industries, and foster partnerships across government, academia, and the private sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB2907. I appreciate the Legislature's thoughtful consideration of measures that strengthen Hawaii's position within the blue economy. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill so that our state can continue to advance comprehensive, forward-looking marine policy and economic development.

Thank you,

Veronica Rocha

Veronica Rocha

Aloha Committee Chairs Senators Gabbards and DeCoite, and Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai,

My name is Dr. Nicholas Ulm, the CEO of Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS). My company is a local marine energy developer producing the Halona wave energy buoy. Our technology is the product of a decade of research out of the University of Hawaii and functions on the principles that make the Halona Blowhole spout. HOPS enthusiastically provides our support for this bill as it would provide numerous opportunities for the blue economy of Hawaii. Our company is relatively young, and greater capacity at the state level to coordinate blue economy activities is needed to help see our efforts succeed. In the short time since our founding in 2021, we have seen the most growth from interacting with ocean cluster organizations.

Since the founding of my company, HOPS has had the pleasure of engaging with numerous ocean clusters, incubators, and accelerator programs. We began with HATCH Blue, in their Ocean Foundry incubation program over in Kailua-Kona. That program helped us to develop our commercial readiness to provide marine energy to the operational needs of our local mariculture food production systems. This was our first interaction with a blue economy sector commercial support program in Hawaii. Upon completion of this, we continued with the University of Hawaii's HITIDE program, to progress the commercial readiness for other sectors. Unfortunately due to sunseting funds and DOGE effects from the federal administration, both support systems were lost at a crucial point for us.

The benefit is that although the programs ended, the people remain. The staff from both state supported programs encouraged HOPS to engage with the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerator Program. It is a nation-wide program that is run by a number of different ocean cluster organizations from across the country to bring blue economy technologies into commercial readiness. Because Hawaii lacked the cluster organization when the initial funding was allocated in the previous federal administration, HOPS had to look elsewhere. We were privileged to be selected to participate in the Continuum program, hosted by Braid Theory. This virtual program is based in Los Angeles and helped us to gain insight to all the ocean cluster organizations from around the US. What we saw was stunning; although each ocean cluster was relatively young, there was already a vibrant tech community sprouting out with numerous companies pioneering new technologies. At AltaSea in the Port of LA, you had robotics companies partnering with local harbors to connect community members with technology needs with technology companies with solutions to address them. This benefitted the harbors, who needed robots to clean up plastic pollution, helped the community to have a trusted organization to go through, and helped the tech company to create more jobs for the local economy. These technology companies are rapidly growing because of the ecosystem that the ocean cluster presents: collaboration, coordination, and opportunity to cross-pollinate better solutions for the environment.

It was both encouraging and incredibly frustrating for me. Encouraging because it shows that the blue economy space is rapidly expanding and frustrating because it shows how we are neglecting one of our most valuable assets here at home.

I was born and raised on Oahu. I have spent the entirety of my career to advancing the understanding of our oceans through sustainably powered ocean observing buoys. In this time, I have been able to interact with the wealth of ocean technology companies and enthusiasts here at home, most of whom are bootstrapping ideas that could be taken to a much larger scale with the correct nurturing. Ideas that require the coordination at a much higher level to be able to understand the interconnectivity of how what one person is doing can help another group. Although we have local technology organizations like MTS, their role is not the same as what an ocean cluster does. MTS meetings present technologies, but efforts still feel as if they operate in silo. This does not create the environments I saw at the other ocean clusters.

We need to create systems to support our local blue economy. For this reason, HOPS supports this bill.



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+1-808-938-2840
jim.wyban@gmail.com

February 8 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



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

Hearing Date: Monday, February 9, 2026, at 3:05 PM, Conference Room 224

To:

Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

From: Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS)

Position: Support

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Chair DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Members of the Committees,

Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS) respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of **SB 2907**, relating to marine affairs.

HOPS is a Hawai'i-based ocean technology company working at the intersection of marine environments, renewable energy, and ocean observation. Our work depends on effective coordination across public agencies, researchers, and industry partners to responsibly develop and deploy ocean-based solutions that serve Hawai'i's long-term environmental and economic needs.

SB 2907 takes an important step by formally recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishing an Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes. This structure provides much-needed coordination capacity without creating a new regulatory layer and ensures accountability through annual reporting to the Governor and Legislature. For companies like HOPS, this type of centralized coordination helps reduce fragmentation across agencies, improves alignment between public and private efforts, and creates clearer pathways for innovation to be tested and deployed here in Hawai'i. Just as importantly, formal designation of Hawai'i's ocean economy as a state priority sends a strong signal to federal, philanthropic, and private partners that Hawai'i is prepared to lead in developing responsible ocean solutions.

The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator position represents a modest but highly leveraged investment. A single point of leadership can help catalyze funding opportunities, support collaboration across sectors, and ensure that economic development, environmental stewardship, and cultural responsibility remain aligned. For these reasons, Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions strongly supports the passage of SB 2907. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued leadership on issues critical to Hawai'i's ocean future.

Respectfully submitted,

Kapono M. Gaughen

Communications Officer, Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions (HOPS)



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Friday, February 13, 2026

Support SB2907

Aloha Chairs Gabbard and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Richards and Wakai, and Committee Members:

My name is Antoinette Davis, Executive Director of the Activities and Attractions Association of Hawai'i (A3H), a nonprofit 501(c)(6) trade organization, since 1997.

A3H supports this measure SB2907 to establish the Office of Marine Affairs (for administrative purposes under HTDC), create a Marine Affairs Coordinator position, require annual reporting to the Governor and Legislature, transfer the functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs, and fund one 1.0 FTE position (approx. \$150K).

Many A3H members operate commercial ocean and beach activities. Too many shoreline and boat harbor facilities are in disrepair and lack consistent management compared to leading global destinations. Hawai'i's Blue Economy deserves dedicated, coordinated leadership to improve stewardship, planning, and accountability.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Toni

Toni Marie Davis
Executive Director
Activities & Attractions Association of Hawaii, Inc.
Statewide 501 (c) (6) not-for-profit Trade Association
PO Box 598, Makawao, Hawaii 96768
(808)871-7947

Testimony in Regards to SB2907



To: Chair Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai, and Members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism; and Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III, and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

My name is Ronald Tardiff, and I submit this testimony on behalf of 1000 Ocean Startups (1000OS), a global coalition of incubators, accelerators, entrepreneur-support organizations, and investors working to support and scale ocean-impact startups globally. Collectively, 1000OS members have supported more than 600 ocean-impact ventures, valued at an estimated USD 11.25–14.64 billion. We also collaborate with research organizations, including the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, to analyze the enabling conditions that allow ocean solutions to scale and deliver durable outcomes.

1000 Ocean Startups sees merit in SB2907 because this measure tackles a central enabling constraint in sustainability transitions: public–private governance capacity. Hawai‘i is well positioned to close the scaling gap because it already has a dense, capable community of ocean innovators and support organizations, with more than twenty ocean innovation ventures active in the state. For example, Hawai‘i-based Symbrosia (supported by Hatch Blue among others) recently raised \$5.8 million to scale methane-reducing seaweed feed, illustrating the commercially viable, climate-relevant innovation already emerging locally. By strengthening public–private governance capacity through SB2907 and an ocean cluster designation, Hawai‘i can better align priorities across agencies and partners and unlock greater collective impact through a clear coordination mandate and convening platform—reducing fragmentation, aligning investment and procurement signals, and enabling agencies, industry, and community partners to deliver shared priorities through repeatable collaboration.

Building local innovation capacity is also an economic strategy. When solutions are imported, Hawai‘i may benefit as a test site or end user, but much of the value often accrues elsewhere through external ownership of intellectual property, supply chains, and service contracts. Supporting locally designed, locally anchored solutions increases the likelihood that high-value capabilities, jobs, and enterprises stay in Hawai‘i—strengthening supply chains, developing the workforce, and positioning the state to export island- and coastal-relevant expertise and technology, not just adopt what’s built elsewhere. Moreover, by integrating Native Hawaiian knowledge and centering community benefit, the bill helps anchor innovation in Hawai‘i’s stewardship context and supports more durable social and ecological outcomes.

For these reasons, 1000 Ocean Startups considers SB2907 as practical, evidence-aligned next steps to strengthen Hawai‘i’s ocean innovation system, support Hawai‘i’s ocean economy, and increase the likelihood that locally grounded solutions translate into sustained reductions in ocean pressures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald Tardiff", written over a light blue circular watermark.

Ronald Tardiff
Executive, 1000 Ocean Startups
<https://www.1000oceanstartups.org>

SB-2907

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:16:11 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2026 3:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

Statement of

Alana Marsili

Director of Government & Foreign Relations

Privateer Space

before the
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

In consideration of

SB2907

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:

Privateer Space 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 ocean innovation while growing economic opportunity across the Pacific.

Hawai‘i’s blue economy already plays a vital role in regional resilience, maritime activity, and workforce development. As the largest island state in the Pacific and steward of one of the world’s largest Exclusive Economic Zones, Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to serve as a hub for applied ocean technology, public-private collaboration, and responsible innovation that supports both economic growth and public safety.

SB2907 provides dedicated leadership and strategic coordination across sectors, helping ensure that ocean innovation efforts operate as part of a connected system. This governance framework will help attract new funding opportunities, support future-ready jobs, and strengthen collaboration among government, industry, academia, and community stakeholders.

Privateer Space is a Hawai‘i-based geospatial intelligence company focused on commercial data integration, artificial intelligence, and maritime domain awareness. Our work supports governments and partners in understanding commercial vessel activity, identifying patterns of

life, and addressing emerging gray-zone maritime challenges. Programs supported by HTDC play an important role in enabling companies like ours to engage locally, build partnerships, and contribute to Hawai'i's growing ocean innovation ecosystem.

Importantly, SB2907 is not about picking winners. It is about creating the conditions for collaboration, experimentation, and long-term impact — ensuring that emerging technologies are developed and deployed in ways that reflect Hawai'i's values while advancing resilience, sustainability, and security across the Pacific.

In summary, SB2907 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawai'i's leadership in ocean technology and innovation while supporting a resilient economic future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Sincerely,

Alana Marsili

Director of Government & Foreign Relations, Privateer Space



Statement of
David Holt
Program Director
Blue Startups
before the
Committee on Economic Development and Technology

In consideration of
SB2907

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chair and Vice Chair and Members of the Committee on **Economic Development and Technology**

Blue Startups 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.

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,
David Holt
Program Director, Blue Startups

DATE: February 09, 2026

TO: **Senator Mike Gabbard**, The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Lynn DeCoite, The Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
FROM: George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow
RE: S.B. 2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs
HEARING DATE: Monday, February 09, 2026

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees:

I submit this testimony in **strong support of Senate Bill 2907**, which advocates for the recognition of Hawai'i as an "ocean cluster" and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs.

I am an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), and for several years I have worked to coordinate Hawai'i's ocean technology ecosystem by attracting investment and supporting local startups. Through collaborations with partners like the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, University of Hawai'i, and established mainland ocean clusters, I have explored how Hawai'i can best position itself within the global blue economy.

The urgency for this bill is underscored by the recent UHERO report, which reveals that Hawai'i's economy is steadily **"falling behind"** the rest of the nation. The report indicates that our economic distress is not merely a "price of paradise" issue, but a result of **stagnant productivity and limited opportunity** that has persisted for 35 years. I propose we buck this trend. I grew up here and returned to start a family. I want this Hawai'i to be a place of opportunity for my 2 year old daughter.

To reverse this trajectory, we must build **new opportunities for economic growth**. This requires deliberate, well-designed policies that identify and remove barriers to diversification and innovation. We are trying to do just that with **S.B. 2907** and **S.B. 3167**. By formally recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, and then initiating an office dedicated to this development, we signal to local innovators, investors, philanthropists and federal agencies that the blue economy—which already supports nearly 100,000 jobs and generates \$9.2 billion in GDP—is a top state priority.

Recognizing an ocean cluster offers a pathway to unify fragmented marine sectors and leverage our unique geography to position Hawai'i as a leader in maritime innovation. This top-down commitment is essential for pursuing large-scale federal grants that can transform our economy and provide the life that people are leaving Hawai'i for.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

George Yarbrough
IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow | gyarbrough@economicrecoverycorps.org

SB-2907

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:48:27 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2026 3:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I was disappointed to see the companion of this bill, HB1829 be deferred so soon and I **STRONGLY** encourage the committee to not make the same mistake. We need to sustainably develop the resources around us to provide for common economic prosperity. This bill will help strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of our state. It will help provide more opportunity to hard pressed working- and middle-class families.

I **STRONGLY** urge this committee to **SUPPORT** SB2907!

SB-2907

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:33:51 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Wu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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.

I have professional experience as an investor focused on the blue economy, and believe that HTDC’s programs and efforts in the marine ecosystem plays an important role in fostering the growth and scaling of marine business activity.

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,
Chris Wu

Statement of
Carlos Navarro
before the
Committee on Agriculture and Environment, and
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Friday, February 13, 2026
2:30pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SB2907
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Chairs Lynn DeCoite and Mike Gabbard, and Vice Chairs Glenn Wakai and Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III, and Members of the Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Economic Development and Tourism

I, Carlos Navarro, 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.

As an entrepreneurial Ph.D. scientist who founded and operated a start-up company in Boston, I have seen how strategic, sustained public investment in innovation infrastructure can catalyze an entire regional economy. Over two decades, the intentional investments Massachusetts leadership made in their innovators through entities like the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and Blue Angels Upswell, building

what is now the world's leading biotech cluster, creating tens of thousands of jobs, and attracting billions in capital.

I believe Hawai'i has a similar opportunity to cultivate a blue economy-equivalent by leaning into our unique geography, remarkable academic researchers and innovators, and collaborating with Native Hawaiian knowledge in stewardship, but a foundational strategic framework is necessary to begin coordinating and building together. I see companies like Hawai'i Ocean Power Solutions, founded by a talented local graduate, undertaking the difficult entrepreneurial journey to build and scale a remarkable wave energy technology, who would thrive in the opportunities a blue cluster would provide. The Office of Marine Affairs which SB2907 would establish can be the cornerstone Hawai'i needs to develop our blue ecosystem, attract federal and private investment, and make Hawai'i known as the force in ocean innovation and technology that we are.

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,
Carlos Navarro

DATE: 2026-FEB-13

TO: Senators Mike Gabbard, Tim Richards, Lynn DeCoite, Glenn Wakai, Donovan Dela Cruz, Sharon Moriwaki

FROM: Brennan Yamamoto

RE: SB2907, RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

Aloha Senators Mike Gabbard, Tim Richards, Lynn DeCoite, Glenn Wakai, Donovan Dela Cruz, Sharon Moriwaki, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, Economic Development and Tourism, 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 operate fleets of cutting-edge autonomous surface vehicles 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 substantially 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 provide. A government agency tasked with stewardship and advocacy of ocean technologies can act to *proactively* support essential efforts like this example.

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