

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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SYLVIA LUKE
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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARK

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

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
1:01 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2979
RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Senate Bill 2979 authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands; authorizes the Department to dispose state land through community co-management agreements; establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into community co-management agreements. **The Department submits this testimony in strong support of this measure and offers the following comments.**

This measure responds to long-standing structural limitations that prevent the Department from forming meaningful, long-term partnerships with community organizations that are essential to the stewardship, education, and care of public lands. Across the Department's divisions, existing legal tools—such as short-term permits, rights-of-entry, revocable agreements, or concession contracts—do not adequately support community-based co-management models and do not align with public trust principles or on-the-ground realities.

The Department manages vast and diverse public lands with limited staff and resources. These lands require ongoing stewardship, education, restoration, cultural access, and monitoring that cannot be met by the Department alone. Community partners regularly step forward to fulfill these roles on a volunteer or nonprofit basis, without seeking commercial benefit. However, current mechanisms do not allow for secure, long-term agreements that reflect the true nature of these partnerships.

In some cases, the Department has been unable to implement community co-management because existing legal tools are either too restrictive or inappropriate. For example, leasing arrangements that grant exclusive control have been found to conflict with public trust requirements, while concession agreements are designed for commercial activity and are not suitable for non-commercial stewardship or cultural partnerships. As a result, the Department

has been limited to short-term or revocable agreements that fail to meet long-term management and restoration goals.

These short-term arrangements also make it difficult for community organizations to obtain funding or invest in long-term projects. Financial institutions are reluctant to support programs where agreements are month-to-month, revocable, or lack long-term security. Community partners must repeatedly seek renewals, creating uncertainty and administrative burden that undermines sustained engagement and capacity-building.

Senate Bill 2979 would allow the Board of Land and Natural Resources to enter into community co-management agreements through direct negotiation, without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations. This authority would create a more appropriate and transparent pathway for long-term partnerships that support stewardship, mālama ‘āina, and public access.

Under this framework, the Department would continue to require compliance with all applicable laws, including Chapter 343, HRS, and would ensure community outreach and environmental review where required.

Many community organizations lack the capacity to meet the financial, bonding, and environmental testing requirements associated with long-term commercial leases. Community co-management agreements would allow these largely volunteer-based groups to provide management, maintenance, education, restoration, and cultural programming without being subject to requirements that are unrelated to their mission or activities.

For lands managed for conservation and resource protection, such as Forest Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Natural Area Reserves, and Nā Ala Hele trails, long-term agreements are especially critical. Restoration, ecosystem recovery, and cultural practices require time horizons that extend well beyond the limits of short-term permits. A co-management framework would allow for sustained collaboration, trust-building, and continuity of care.

In addition, many public lands—such as forest reserves—do not generate sufficient revenue to cover management costs. Community co-management agreements would allow partners to generate revenue, where appropriate, to help offset operational and stewardship expenses while maintaining public access and trust protections.

Senate Bill 2979 provides a long-term, secure, and flexible framework that protects the public trust, strengthens relationships between the Department and community partners, and supports collaborative mālama ‘āina principles. It fills a critical gap in existing law and enables the Department to more effectively steward Hawai‘i’s public lands for present and future generations.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Department recommends as amendments that the language of Senate Bill 2979 mirror that of House Bill 2218, which permits direct negotiation with community-based organizations and collaboration with one or more community-based organizations over the same portion of public lands. Further, House Bill 2218 refers to “place-based education” as “‘āina education,” which appropriately reflects how Native Hawaiian practitioners refer to education for particular public lands.

Accordingly, on Page 4, Lines 4-5, omitting “a,” adding “one or more” after “and,” and adding an “s” after “organization.” The amendment will read as follows:

“Community co-management agreement” means the collaboration under a written agreement between the department and a one or more community-based organizations that allocates the sharing of management functions, responsibilities, and the rights of entry and use for a community co-management unit under the jurisdiction of the department.

On Page 4, Line 20 to Page 5, Line 1, adding a comma after “agreements” and the following: “by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction,”. The amendment will read as follows:

§171-C Community co-management agreements. (a) The department may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with community-based organizations, qualified pursuant to section 171-D, to carry out the purposes of this part.

Lastly, on Page 4, Lines 16-18, omitting “place-based education” and adding the definition of “āina education,” as used in House Bill 2218. This would further require replacing “placed-based education” with “āina education,” as used on Page 5, line 14.

The amendments will read as follows:

§171-B Definitions. Notwithstanding any other definition to the contrary provided in this chapter, as used in this part:

“Āina education” means learning pathways that are guided and grounded in geographic place, ‘ama and kai, and Native Hawaiian values, language, culture, and history.

....

~~“Place-based education” means learning pathways that are guided and grounded in geographic place and Native Hawaiian values, language, culture, and history.~~

....

§171-C Community co-management agreements. (a) The department may enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations, qualified pursuant section 171-D, to carry out the purposes of this part.

(b) Community co-management agreements shall be used exclusively for one or more of the following purposes:

....

(5) ~~Place-based education~~ ‘Āina education;

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments in strong support of this measure.

LATE



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO SB2979
RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT
AGREEMENTS

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Wai, ‘Āina, a me ka Mo‘omeheu a me nā Hana No‘eau
(Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts)

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

Pepeluali 18, 2026

1:01PM

Lumi 224

Aloha e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB2979, which provides a clear and consistent pathway and standards for the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enter into community co-management agreements. Such agreements empower communities to continue to mālama ‘āina and support ahupua‘a-based management. We also are supportive of the amendments as put forth by Kua‘āina Ulu ‘Auamo (KUA), and recommend the same amendments.

OHA supports policies that protect and perpetuate traditional, place-based management practices consistent with OHA’s statutory and constitutional duties. OHA is the constitutionally-established body responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of Native Hawaiians.¹ Further, under the Hawai‘i State Constitution Article XII, section 7, the state has a specific duty to protect Native Hawaiian cultural practices, including practices that mālama ‘āina. In furtherance of its constitutional mission, OHA has identified the following strategic priority relevant to SB2979: “Increased community stewardship of Hawai‘i’s natural and cultural resources that foster connection to ‘āina, ‘ohana, and communities.”² OHA therefore has substantive obligations to protect the cultural and

¹ Haw. Const. Art. XII Sec. 5

² Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *Mana I Maui Ola: OHA’s 15-Year Strategic Plan for 2020-2035*, available at <https://www.oha.org/about/mana-to-maui-ola/>.

natural resources of Hawai‘i for the agency’s beneficiaries and believes this measure assists in this kuleana.³

OHA recognizes community-based stewardship and management as perpetuating Native Hawaiian traditional and customary resource management practices. OHA has supported community-based fisheries management initiatives, particularly initiatives by rural communities that follow the Native Hawaiian traditions, values, and lifestyles that have sustained communities for generations.⁴ The promotion of traditional, place-based harvesting practices also preserves and perpetuates culture, highlights the cultural significance of the nearshore area, and models the sense of respect traditionally maintained for the ocean and its resources.

DLNR has long acknowledged that it alone cannot sustainably manage the public trust lands. Place based management by ‘āina based groups ensures resource protection and assists DLNR in fulfilling its mission to sustainability manage public trust lands. While communities and the State increasingly demonstrate overlapping interests and goals, no consistent legal pathway exists for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements.

SB2979 will ensure DLNR has the authority to enter into community co-management agreements to continue the work they are already doing and for years to come. The management framework outlined in this bill provides meaningful guidance to identify bona fide community groups with community ties and place-based relationships, and establishes clear rights, roles, and responsibilities of co-managers. The proposed framework in this bill is not merely theory, but codifies demonstrated best practices developed by community groups practicing mālama ‘āina. Authorizing community co-management agreements allows Native Hawaiian and local communities to care for their beloved places.

Amending this bill to allow direct negotiation and an exemption from the public auction process as in HB2218 is appropriate; these management agreements are with community organizations not for-profit or commercial entities. We suggest adding the following amendment to (Page 4, Line 20 to Page 5, Line 1):

³ See HRS Chapter 10.

⁴ See, e.g., Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees Resolution of February 27, 2014, *A Resolution Supporting Community Based Subsistence Fishing Area Designation and Rules*.

“§171-C Community co-management agreements. (a)
The department may enter into community co-management
agreements, by direct negotiation and without
recourse to public auction, with community-based
organizations, qualified pursuant to section 171-D,
to carry out the purposes of this part.”

We are also supportive of KUA’s suggested amendments to replace “āina-based education” with “place-based education” that more closely aligns with the language in HB2218. Further, we support the definition as provided by KUA for “community co-management agreement” to mean “the collaboration under a written agreement between the department and one or more community-based organization...” that also more closely aligns with the language in HB2218, and is more aligned with the realities of organizations eligible under these agreements.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS SB2979**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR

REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR



Testimony of Derek S.K. Kawakami

Mayor, County of Kaua'i

Before the

Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

February 18, 2026; 1:01 PM

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

In consideration of

Senate Bill 2979 Relating to Community Co-Management Agreements

Honorable Chair Lee, Honorable Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

I write in **strong support** for SB 2979 which authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands, authorizes the DLNR to dispose state lands through community co-management agreements, and establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into community co-management agreements.

This legislation addresses critical gaps in Hawai'i's natural resource management framework while honoring traditional native Hawaiian stewardship practices with qualified community-based organizations.

Many community-government partnerships have existed for years in Hawai'i. The Hui Maka'āinana o Makana from Hā'ena, Kaua'i has worked for over two decades to steward Hā'ena State Park. The Hui has helped transform what was once a chaotic and overrun park to an area where the practices of our kupuna are perpetuated through the interpretation, restoration, care, and protection of its natural and cultural resources.

Although the Hui has a concession agreement with the DLNR, a longer-term agreement that honors the traditional native Hawaiian concept of mālama 'āina and place-based practices for natural and cultural resource management will allow them and other community groups across the state to effectively manage the State's public trust resources. SB 2979 provides the mechanism for this care and protection.

Community co-management is not merely a cultural preference – it is a practical necessity. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of SB 2979.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NALANI BRUN, DIRECTOR



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of Nalani Ka'auwai Brun

Director, Office of Economic Development
County of Kauai

Before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

February 18, 2026, at 1:01 p.m.
Room 224 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of
Senate Bill 2979
Relating to Community Co-Management Agreements

Honorable Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Nalani Ka'auwai Brun, Director of the Office of Economic Development for the County of Kaua'i. I submit this testimony **in strong support of SB 2979**, which authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources to enter into community co-management agreements with qualified community-based organizations.

This bill provides an important framework for the State to work collaboratively with community in stewarding public lands. Across Hawai'i, communities have demonstrated long-term commitment to cultural preservation, ecological restoration, and responsible visitor management. SB 2979 recognizes that partnership model while maintaining accountability and oversight.

We respectfully offer three recommendations to strengthen the measure:

First, allow community co-management agreements to be entered into by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, consistent with existing allowances for leases to eleemosynary organizations under HRS §171-43.1. These agreements are based on demonstrated stewardship and trust, not competitive bidding.

Second, replace the term "place-based education" with "āina education." Community feedback emphasized that 'āina education more accurately reflects learning rooted in Native Hawaiian values, language, and cultural practice.

Third, clarify that co-management agreements may involve one or more community-based organizations, recognizing that stewardship often occurs through cooperative networks rather than a single entity.

The communities we work with are committed to responsible stewardship, transparency, and partnership. SB 2979 allows Hawai'i to move forward by recognizing cooperative models that reflect how 'āina was successfully cared for in the past, while providing modern structure and accountability.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of SB 2979 with amendments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 1:01 p.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
and

Vassilis L. Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2979 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports SB 2979. This measure would authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enter into “community co-management agreements” with qualified Hawai'i based nonprofit groups both mauka (inland) and makai (seaward).

Hawai'i Sea Grant supports a novel program of research, education, and extension services, directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems of the state, region, and nation. Authorizing co-management agreements between DLNR and qualified Hawai'i-based nonprofit groups will place one more tool in the region's tool box for effective stewardship of natural resources.

Hawai'i Sea Grant partners with DLNR and many community nonprofits across the state on coastal and marine research and conservation initiatives. Co-management agreements will open up new opportunities for collaboration that support thriving coastal ecosystems, community resilience, and the perpetuation of cultural practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 9:47:50 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee , Vice Chair Inouye, and honorable members of committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, as Co Chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i , and on behalf of our members we offer VERY STRONG SUPPORT for SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. The foundations of these lineal descendant communities are stronger than anything the State of Hawai'i can build, so this is common sense legislation. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation than to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama 'āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

The Green Party of Hawai'i asks for your Strong Support of SB2979.

Mahalo!

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo



Testimony Before The
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts (WLA)
IN SUPPORT OF SB2979
February 18, 2026, 1:01 p.m., Room 224 & via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Kevin Chang, Kua'āina Advocate and Executive Director, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

KUA strongly supports SB2979 as an incremental step toward 'āina momona, and offers a few friendly amendments that derived from community feedback on this effort.

This measure would authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations to enter into "community co-management agreements" concerning state lands both mauka (inland) and makai (seaward), authorize DLNR to dispose of state lands through these types of agreements, and establish qualifications for who may enter into these agreements. **We recognize and appreciate that this measure was based on [HB2218](#) (companion [SB2685](#)) with a few modifications.**

Co-management, one pathway for community-based mālama'āina efforts, has been a core purpose in the development of Community-based Subsistence Fishing Areas (CBSFA), with three established so far in Hā'ena, Miloli'i, and Kīpahulu. The genesis of the CBSFA law came out of community efforts originating at Mo'omomi, Molokai, which inspired a number of other communities to seek CBSFA. Since that time community efforts have sustained the work in various forms despite a great gap in the state's capacity and willingness to collaborate or formally define with communities what this collaboration means. Along with the existing CBSFA law, the conservation field has slowly started to change. An Environmental Court, a DOCARE

Academy, dedicated Makai Watch and CBSFA positions, improved adaptive management laws, and a Green Fee were all established in-part to support community-based environmental efforts.

KUA helped support the development of similar measure HB2218 and its companion SB2685 over the past several months with significant community input and under the leadership of the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana (the Hui), longtime collaborative caretakers of the Hā'ena State Park on Kaua'i. KUA was founded in part by leaders from Hā'ena and the Hui to empower communities to care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage together. We work to increase resilience, adaptation, and transformation through community-based biocultural resource management while supporting our three major networks.

This legislative effort in particular was born in response to a surprising shift from an expected long-term lease to the Hui at a recent Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) meeting on July 25, 2025, to a concession agreement that was deemed the “only” legal instrument available to secure a long-term agreement with the Hui. As made clear during that BLNR meeting, while the Hui greatly appreciated the efforts of Division of State Parks (DSP) to help secure a concession agreement, the shift from an anticipated long-term lease came as a huge shock and disappointment to the Hui and many of their supporters. Both DSP and the Hui voiced that a concession agreement is a step backward in their decades-long journey toward co-management of their ancestral 'āina in Hā'ena. After this disappointing BLNR meeting, and with strong support from Speaker Nakamura's office, an informal “Community Co-management Strategy Working Group” was formed to delve further into the issues and solutions toward better recognition and support for community co-management in Hawai'i. What emerged from an issue only for the Hui was insight on a policy gap that could serve a greater statewide effort for other community co-management initiatives across the state. Ultimately, the working group helped with the creation of HB2218 (companion SB2685) as one solution to this dynamic issue. **Please visit our [website](#) for more background information, particularly about the Hui's history with co-management and the inspirations behind this effort.**

Emphasizing the collaborative nature of this bill, DLNR (DSP and Division of Aquatic Resources) have also been key partners from the very beginning, with the Division of Forestry and Wildlife recently joining as well. House Speaker Nakamura's office has also been instrumental in this whole effort. KUA hosted three community talk story sessions regarding this legislation, the first involving our E Alu Pū network members on October 11, 2025 in Kahalu'u on Hawai'i Island, as well as two virtual talk story sessions on October 28, 2025 and January 7, 2026 with several KUA network members and partners. Feedback from this community outreach was carefully incorporated into HB2218 and companion SB2685. We are so grateful for this alternative version being heard today, SB2979, and appreciate the other revisions made. However, **we request that a few key parts of the other two community co-management bills be incorporated into this version, as they were added to those versions after our latest community outreach event on January 7, 2026:**

1. We suggest **exempting these types of agreements from having to go through the public auction process**, based on what is already allowed for leasing of public lands to eleemosynary organizations (nonprofit charities) under [Hawai'i Revised Statutes \(HRS\) § 171-43.1](#). This would ensure direct negotiation for these types of agreements, instead of forcing a public auction process. Like HB2218, we suggest adding this here (Page 4, Line 20 to Page 5, Line 1):

“§171-C Community co-management agreements. (a)

The department may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with community-based organizations, qualified pursuant to section 171-D, to carry out the purposes of this part.”

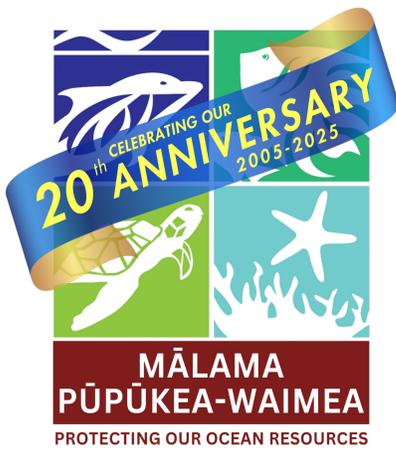
2. After speaking with Native Hawaiian leaders and experts in education, we suggest **replacing all mentions of “place-based education,” to “‘āina education”** as the most-appropriate term for these types of agreements. Although some scholars use the terms interchangeably, community feedback reflected that they did not want to confuse “‘āina education” with “place-based education” that may not be rooted in Native Hawaiian values or practices.
3. In the definition for “community co-management agreement” allowing for potential collaborations for the same area with one *or more* organization. Similar to HB2218 this could be added here (Page 4, Lines 4-5):

“Community co-management agreement” means the collaboration under a written agreement between the department and ~~a~~ one or more community-based organization...”

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe protecting our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about sustained and long-term commitments toward achieving ‘āina momona abundance once again.** To get there requires clear steps to enable more collaborative mālama ‘āina efforts, including through this bill. Our decisions today will continue to shape the future that our keiki’s keiki’s keiki will one day inherit – we hope for a future of shared and harmonious abundance, and hope you do, too.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** SB2979 with our suggested friendly amendments as reflected in HB2218 and its companion SB2685.

Aloha ‘Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.



February 18, 2026

WLA Hearing, 1:01 pm

SB2979 DLNR Co-Management – In Support

Aloha WLA Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members,

Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea (MPW) is a Hawai'i non-profit organization founded on the North Shore of O'ahu in 2005. Our mission is "working to replenish and sustain the natural and cultural resources of the Pūpūkea and Waimea ahupua'a for present and future generations through active community stewardship, education, and partnerships."

For twenty-one years, we have focused our collaborative stewardship and education efforts on the Pūpūkea Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD), one of only three MLCDs on O'ahu.

MPW strongly supports SB2979 and companion HB2218.

This bill provides DLNR clear authority to enter into community based co-management agreements, with qualified community groups, which significantly amplifies the ability of both the State and communities across the islands to more effectively achieve our collective goals for sustained protection of the 'āina.

Mahalo for passing SB2979!

Denise Antolini

President, MPW

Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea
Post Office Box 188
Hale'iwa, HI 96712

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Federal Nonprofit Organization
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HUI MAKA'ĀINANA O MAKANA

teaching the skills, knowledge, and practices of our kūpuna (ancestors) through the interpretation, restoration, care, and protection of natural and cultural resources in within the Hā'ena State Park.

TO: Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 2026
TIME: 1:01 PM
PLACE: Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

From: Chipper Wichman, Vice President
Hui Maka'āinana o Makana

RE: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2979 RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS.**

I am writing today as a founding Director and current Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana (the Hui) a nonprofit established in 1998 to support the care and management of Hā'ena State Park (HSP). **The Hui is in strong support of SB 2979 as well as the amendments being proposed by KUA and the amendments being proposed by DLNR.**

First off, mahalo Sen Lee for introducing this bill supporting the idea of community co-management agreements. Your leadership in this effort is much appreciated!!! The Hui Maka'āinana o Makana has worked closely with DLNR leadership over the past six months to prepare the draft of this bill that you introduced! This drafting process brought together community leaders from across the *pae 'āina* (Hawaiian archipelago) to work collaboratively with the leaders and subject matter specialists from DLNR. In the 50+ years that I have been advocating for community-based resource management I have never been part of such a collaborative process. This reflects that importance of this bill for both our communities as well as our government.

SB 2979, as currently written, will authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enter into “community co-management agreements” with qualified Hawai'i-based nonprofit groups both mauka (inland) and makai (seaward). **This is a “tool” that our State needs to have in our toolbox so that we can collectively work together to better manage the natural and cultural heritage of our State!**

The initial motivation to draft this bill came from the deep frustration caused by the inability of the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) in July of last year to issue a long-term lease to our Hui for the management of Hā'ena State Park (HSP). State Parks and the Hui have been working diligently towards the goal of a long-term lease since the Master Plan for HSP was approved in 2018. The concept of a nonprofit lease was the preferred community option on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared along with the Master Plan for HSP.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2979 RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

However, after working together over the past six years to achieve the goal of a long-term lease, it finally became clear at the BLNR meeting on July 25, 2025, that the legislature would need to create a new legal pathway to achieve this important goal. What happened next is something that we should all be proud of. Community leaders and government leaders worked hand-in-hand, week after week, to not only draft this bill but to engage widespread community input and support.

The legal drafting of the bill over the past several months was done by Olan Leimomi Fisher the Kua'āina Advocate working for Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (or KUA) in collaboration with a "working group" made up of government experts and community leaders. KUA then used their networks to vet the ideas and language that would become the foundation of the draft bill. KUA also met with communities across the State (both in person and virtually) creating an effective feed-back loop that informed the drafting process and ultimately the final language that is in the bill before you today. The Hawaii Conservation Alliance (HCA) was also a key partner is helping to draft and vet this bill through their membership and networks! As a result hundreds of community members have been able to provide direct input into the drafting process.

This effort was truly a "Community Led, Government-Supported" process which has been the model our Hui has used to make Hā'ena a State-wide model of regenerative tourism and the gold standard for community-based natural and cultural resource management. What has emerged from years of frustration for our Hui is an opportunity to finally create a legal pathway for community co-management initiatives across the state. What started as an effort solely within the Division of State Park has grown and is now embraced and championed by the Division of Aquatic Resources and the Division of Forestry and Wildlife – all of whom are important members of the "community co-management working group". This bill will truly benefit all of DLNR!

In closing, we strongly urge your support for **SB 2979** and ask that you accept the amendments proposed by KUA in their testimony today and also those being proposed by DLNR in their testimony. These amendments will help to make this bill more in sync with the language in our companion bill **HB 2218** which includes important language in a few sections, that differs from **SB 2979**. Community leaders who provided feedback on earlier drafts of the bill prefer the language used in **HB 2218**. We hope that we can count on you to champion the concepts embodied in this important piece of legislation.

Me ke aloha,



Chipper Wichman, Secretary
Hui Maka'āinana o Makana



Ko`olau Foundation

P. O. Box 4749 / 46-005 Kawa St., #205
Kane`ohe, HI 96744

February 17, 2026

To: Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine Inouye Vice Chair
& Members
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

From: Mahealani Cypher, President

Re: S.B. 2979 – Relating to Community Co-Management Agreements – SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Lee Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members:

The Ko`olau Foundation strongly supports Senate Bill 2979 which authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands. It also authorizes DLNR to dispose of state land through community co-management agreements, and establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into such agreements.

This legislation is long overdue, and can actually prove a big help to state agencies (especially DLNR), which has been challenged with the management of lands which contain cultural resources which are considered of importance to Native Hawaiians for gathering, subsistence or other cultural purposes.

This co-management idea is ideal because it keeps the fee interest in the public domain while sharing the important kuleana of management with community groups, especially Native Hawaiian organizations, for caretaking of these places.

The Ko`olau Foundation has long advocated for the preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian cultural practices, places and heritage. This bill helps to achieve those goals.

We urge your support for passage of this bill.

Mahalo for considering our mana`o.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:34:51 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Nakachi	Testifying for Moana Ohana	Support	In Person

Comments:

My Name is Mike Nakachi of Moana Ohana, from Moku O keawe, In Strong support of SB2979.

Our ike is data and agencies within DLNR need to effectively work with communities to get positive things done for Aina. Agencies of the State however need to listen to the community groups that they partner with because of the inherent failures of the ancestral resources they were supposed to manage over the decades and have failed. So when Communities spend decades of time formulating a plan, the agencies need to work as a fiduciary in supporting the plan not tearing it apart for the agencies best interest.

Strong relationships are built on trust and many of us do NOT trust the DLNR to do the Kakou thing. So Co Management will work if agency listens and trusts communities.

Mahalo, Mike

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting SB2979, Relating to Community Co-management Agreements
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
February 18, 2026 at 1:01pm
Conference Room 224 and via Videoconference

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra strongly supports SB2979, which authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands and authorizes DLNR to dispose state land through community co-management agreements. Additionally, this bill establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into community co-management agreements.

For more than four decades, TNC has worked across Hawai'i to conserve native ecosystems in partnership with the State and community members who hold generational knowledge and kuleana for their lands and waters. These partnerships have advanced watershed protection, invasive species control, community-led monitoring, nearshore fisheries management, coastal restoration, and resident and visitor education. Despite their maturity and success, there remains no consistent statutory authority to define shared responsibilities, roles, and rights of entry and use between DLNR and co-managers.

Across the state, including at Kīholo, Kīpahulu, and Ka'ūpūlehu, TNC has seen how supporting community-led stewardship produces stronger ecological outcomes and more durable, culturally grounded management solutions. These communities already engage in long-standing collaborative management with DLNR, including through Curatorship Agreements, Fishery Management Areas, and other arrangements. However, these tools do not provide the consistent, comprehensive, durable framework needed to clarify shared management functions, ensure accountability, and support the multi-generational planning needed to best manage the state's natural and cultural resources.

By authorizing long-term agreements with qualified nonprofits, this bill allows successful partnerships to be supported in a consistent, transparent, and enduring way. TNC respectfully urges passage of this measure to ensure that Hawai'i's communities and ecosystems can continue to thrive through sustained collaborative care. However, we recommend that key parts of the other two community co-management bills (HB2218/SB2685) be incorporated into this legislation:

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1. We suggest exempting these types of agreements from having to go through the public auction process, based on what is already allowed for leasing of public lands to eleemosynary organizations (nonprofit charities) under Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 171-43.1. This would ensure direct negotiation for these types of agreements, instead of forcing a public auction process. Like HB2218, we suggest adding (Page 4, Line 20 to Page 5, Line 1): “§171-C Community co-management agreements. (a) The department may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with community-based organizations, qualified pursuant to section 171-D, to carry out the purposes of this part.”
2. We suggest replacing all mentions of “place-based education,” to “‘āina education” as the most-appropriate term for these types of agreements. Although some scholars use the terms interchangeably, community feedback reflected that they did not want to confuse “‘āina education” with “place-based education” that may not be rooted in Native Hawaiian values or practices.
3. We suggest in the definition for “community co-management agreement” allowing for potential collaborations for the same area with one or more organization. Similar to HB2218 (Page 4, Lines 4-5): “Community co-management agreement” means the collaboration under a written agreement between the department and a one or more community-based organization...”

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2979.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 84,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and 18 managed areas and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.



KO'OLAUPOKO HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

February 17, 2026

To: Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine Inouye Vice Chair
& Members
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

LATE

Re: S.B. 2979 – Relating to Community Co-Management Agreements – SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Lee Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members:

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club strongly supports Senate Bill 2979 which authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands. It also authorizes DLNR to dispose of state land through community co-management agreements and establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into such agreements.

This legislation is long overdue and can actually prove a big help to state agencies (especially DLNR), which has been challenged with the management of lands which contain cultural resources which are considered of importance to Native Hawaiians for gathering, subsistence or other cultural purposes.

This co-management idea is ideal because it keeps the fee interest in the public domain while sharing the important kuleana of management with community groups, especially Native Hawaiian organizations, for caretaking of these places.

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club has long advocated for the preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian cultural practices, places and heritage. This bill helps to achieve those goals.

We urge your support for passage of this bill.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Charles Naumu, President
Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club was established in 1937 and is one of the largest in the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs nationwide. Ko'olaupoko HCC is a not-for-profit community organization dedicated to preserving and perpetuating the history, heritage and culture of Native Hawaiians and providing leadership and scholarships. Its membership is open to people of Hawaiian ancestry and those who are "Hawaiian at heart."



KO`OLAUPOKO HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

The Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club was established in 1937 and is one of the largest in the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs nationwide. Ko'olaupoko HCC is a not-for-profit community organization dedicated to preserving and perpetuating the history, heritage and culture of Native Hawaiians and providing leadership and scholarships. Its membership is open to people of Hawaiian ancestry and those who are "Hawaiian at heart."

P. O. Box 664 * Kaneohe, HI 96744
Email: koolaupokohcc@gmail.com * Website: www.koolaupoko-hcc.org



SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS

February 18, 2026

1:01 PM

Conference Room 224

In **SUPPORT** of **SB2979**: RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

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

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **strongly supports** SB2979. This bill provides long-needed statutory clarity for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements with qualified Hawai'i-based nonprofits, an essential tool for effective, place-based stewardship across the islands.

For decades, communities across Hawai'i have stepped up to monitor, restore, and mālama the lands and waters they rely on, providing countless thousands of volunteer hours monitoring resources and both human and non-human activities, educating the public, developing place-based and culturally-informed management plans, and otherwise filling the gaps left by the lack of sufficient government resources. Existing community-based partnerships in places such as Hā'ena, Miloli'i, and Kīpahulu have already demonstrated that collaborative co-management strengthens resource protection and supports long-term ecosystem resilience. Yet, as highlighted at the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) meeting on July 25, 2025, the absence of a clear legal co-resource management mechanism has forced the state to rely on unsuitable and piecemeal instruments such as concession agreements, to attempt to leverage the potential contributions of our communities – undermining long-standing community efforts and the true value of community-based stewardship.

SB2979 directly addresses this policy gap. The bill reflects extensive collaboration among community networks and organizations, such as Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo, and multiple DLNR divisions, and provides a consistent framework for shared management from mauka to makai that strengthens ecological resilience, honors cultural responsibility, and advances the public trust.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to **PASS** SB2979.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:59:16 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Kinney	Testifying for Hui Maka‘ainana o Makana	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am Billy Kinney, testifying on behalf of the Hui Maka‘āinana o Makana (the Hui), a nonprofit established in 1998 to support the care and management of Hā‘ena State Park (HSP). Dedicated to the skills, knowledge, and the practices of our ancestors the Hui has been collaborating with State Parks to restore, care for, and protect the lands of HSP. The Hui has been instrumental in shaping what collaborative care and co-management looks like in Hawai‘i: since the late 90’s the Hui has worked closely with State Parks to steward HSP via curatorship, the Hui has created important management schema with the Division of Aquatic Resources and DOCARE establishing the first CBSFA with a management plan and rules package in 2015, and it would set a gold standard for regenerative tourism in its community-led, collaborative efforts to manage visitor access to Hā‘ena State Park since 2019 with DLNR, State Parks, and other agencies.

The Hui is in strong support of SB 2979 as well as the amendments being proposed by KUA and the amendments being proposed by DLNR.

SB2979 as currently written, will authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enter into “community co-management agreements” with qualified Hawai‘i-based nonprofit groups both mauka (inland) and makai (seaward). This is a “tool” that our State needs to have in our toolbox so that we can collectively work together to better manage the natural and cultural heritage of our State. The initial motivation to draft this bill came from the deep frustration caused by the inability of the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) in July of last year to issue a long-term lease to our Hui for the management of Hā‘ena State Park (HSP). State Parks and the Hui have been working diligently towards the goal of a long-term lease since the Master Plan for HSP was approved in 2018. The concept of a nonprofit lease was the preferred community option on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared along with the Master Plan for HSP. Even Dawn Chang (Chair of BLNR at the time) mentioned the “disappointment,” and that we should look for “a way forward for all of Hawai‘i”—she would point to co-management.

After that disappointing BLNR meeting, and with strong support from Speaker Nakamura’s office, an informal “Community Co-management Strategy Working Group” was formed to delve further into the issues and solutions toward better recognition and support for community co-management in Hawai‘i. What emerged from an issue only for the Hui was insight on a policy gap that could serve a greater statewide effort for other community co-management initiatives across the state. Ultimately, the working group helped with the creation of SB2979, HB2218, companion bill SB2685 as a solution. While the origin story was rooted in Hā‘ena with the Hui,

much of the writing and advocacy work was done by Olan Leimomi Fisher the Kua‘āina Advocate working for Kua‘āina Ulu ‘Auamo (or KUA) in collaboration with a “working group” made up of government experts and community leaders. KUA then used their networks to vet the ideas and language that would become the foundation of the draft bill. KUA also met with communities across the State (both in person and virtually) creating an effective, informed drafting process and ultimately the final language that is in the bill before you today. The Hawaii Conservation Alliance (HCA) was also a key partner in helping draft this bill. For the Hui, we have been using the phrase “Community Led, Government-Supported” to encompass how the Hui and its community partners have been able to make Hā'ena the state-wide model of regenerative tourism and the standard for community-based natural and biocultural resource management. While rooted in historical frustration for the Hui, this bill and the familiars are opportunities to finally create a legal pathway for community co-management initiatives across the state—it will truly benefit DLNR and assist the State to fulfill its duties to protect these resources for all. Please, consider being the champions of this extraordinary bill and important piece of legislation. As the experts, members of this committee, we ask that you **STRONGLY** support of SB297 with the roposed amendments from KUA and DLNR!

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:57:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekoa Alip	Testifying for Hui Aloha Kiholo	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.



**Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
February 18, 2026 at 1:01 PM
Room 224**

Testimony in SUPPORT for SB2979

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) we submit our **support for SB2979**. This measure provides an essential framework for community co-management of state lands, strengthening partnerships between DLNR and trusted nonprofit and community stewards.

HANO is a statewide, sector-wide association representing nonprofits across Hawai'i. Since 2006, HANO has worked to strengthen and unite the nonprofit sector as a collective force to improve quality of life statewide by advancing policies and practices that promote nonprofit professionalism, sustainability, and effectiveness.

SB2979 directly supports nonprofits and community-based organizations that have long engaged in place-based stewardship of public trust lands. These organizations bring deep-rooted knowledge and demonstrated capacity to care for natural resources, cultural sites, and customary practices through restoration, education, and mālama 'āina. By establishing clear eligibility and agreement standards, this bill creates more durable, transparent, and effective pathways for community participation in land stewardship.

Community co-management recognizes the reality that many nonprofits have been caring for these lands for generations, often with limited resources but significant public benefit. HB2218 affirms their role as partners in achieving sustainable land management while improving continuity, planning, and long-term stewardship outcomes.

Importantly, this bill advances Hawai'i's constitutional obligations under Articles XI and XII by supporting the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of traditional and customary Native Hawaiian practices. SB2979 aligns state policy with mālama 'āina values and ensures that stewardship decisions are informed by community-based nonprofits and leaders who are most connected to place.

For nonprofits and community-based organizations, this bill represents a meaningful step toward equitable, effective, and culturally grounded stewardship of state lands. HANO respectfully urges your **strong support**.

HAWAI'I OCEAN LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE



February 18, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Re: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB 2979, Relating to Community Co-management Agreements

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and esteemed members of the committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force—a coalition of more than 150 individuals across over 20 organizations statewide—**strongly supports** SB 2979, relating to community co-management agreements. This measure authorizes DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements and establishes qualifications for eligible community co-managers. It also authorizes the disposition of public lands by a community co-management agreement.

SB 2979 advances responsible stewardship of Hawai'i's public trust resources by formally recognizing the role that communities can play in caring for lands and waters through structured partnerships with the State. By authorizing DLNR to enter into written community co-management agreements with qualified community-based organizations, this bill creates a clear legal framework for collaborative, place-based management that can strengthen ecological outcomes while supporting cultural practices and local knowledge.

The Task Force strongly supports the bill's recognition of long-standing Native Hawaiian and community stewardship traditions, which have helped sustain natural and cultural resources for generations. Providing statutory authority for co-management will empower communities to participate meaningfully in conservation, restoration, education, and monitoring efforts in ways that align with both traditional practices and contemporary science.

This measure also helps build long-term local capacity to advance statewide conservation goals. Community co-management agreements can support habitat restoration, protection of marine and coastal resources, visitor management, and the preservation of customary and subsistence practices—priorities that directly align with DLNR's mission to protect Hawai'i's natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations.

The Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that advance cesspool conversion and wastewater management, protect Hawai'i's coral reefs and reef fish, ensure transparent and sustainable implementation of the Green Fee program and long-term environmental staffing, and support other measures that strengthen Hawai'i's coastal and marine ecosystems.

Finally, SB 2979 establishes important qualifications for community co-managers that promote accountability, transparency, and readiness to undertake shared management responsibilities. These standards will help ensure that partnerships are effective, equitable, and grounded in broad community support, while respecting the State's public trust obligations.

For these reasons, the Ocean Legislative Task Force respectfully urges the Committee to pass SB 2979 with favorable recommendations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

The Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that advance cesspool conversion and wastewater management, protect Hawai'i's coral reefs and reef fish, ensure transparent and sustainable implementation of the Green Fee program and long-term environmental staffing, and support other measures that strengthen Hawai'i's coastal and marine ecosystems.

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*"He punawai kahe wale
ke aloha. Love is a
spring that flows
freely."*

Laura Thompson
Director Emeritus
(1925-2020)

Founded 2007



February 16, 2026

Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Hon. Chris Lee, Chair
Hon. Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

Re: SB2979 - RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS
Hrg: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 1:01 PM. in Conference Room 224

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the WLA Committee:

Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center is dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of Maunalua's last fishponds. As a community-led nonprofit that has conserved two Hawaiian legacy fishponds in East Honolulu since 2007, we recognize the critical role of community-based organizations rooted in Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama 'āina and place-based management practices.

When we started in 2007, Kānewai and Kalauha'īha'ī Fishpond lands were up for State auction and Kalauha'īha'ī Fishpond had been approved to be filled in. They were cut off from the community and choked with invasive species and nearly stagnant water. Today these Springs are actively being maintained through community stewardship. Kānewai Spring now has crystalline blue flowing water. Thousands of gallons of freshwater feed each day from this headwater spring out to the adjacent Kānewai Fishpond, Paikō Lagoon State Wildlife Sanctuary and Maunalua Bay. We are currently working with the DLNR to restore artesian water back to Kalauha'īha'ī Spring and Fishpond after the connection was broken during the widening of Kalaniana'ole Highway in the mid-1990s. We also mālama the State land next to Kānewai Spring.

As shown in the community timeline attached, we successfully worked to preserve fishponds through private land purchase, State lease acquisition, restoration of hydrology, habitat management, restoration of traditional Hawaiian fishpond infrastructure, and perpetuation of access and support of cultural practice.

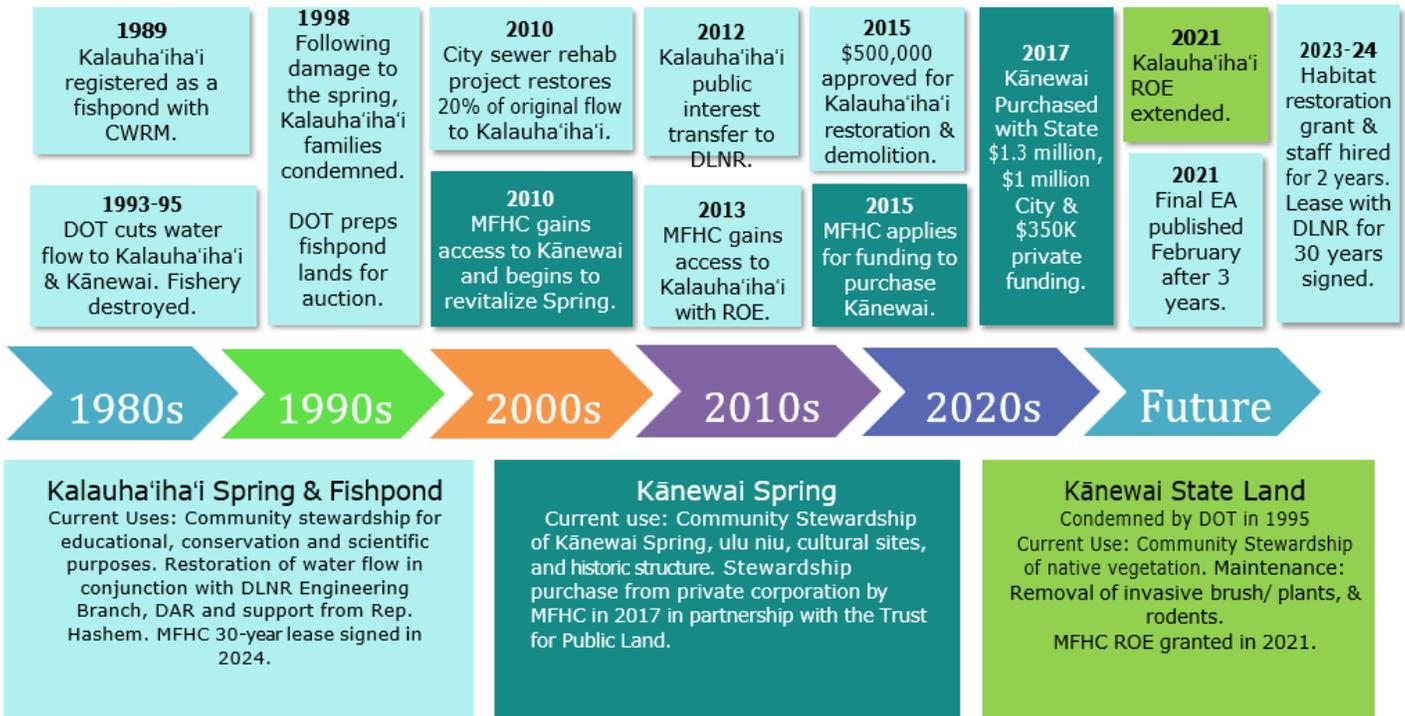
We would support the intent of SB2979 in enabling a community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners to strengthen existing efforts and establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care. However, we strongly oppose authorizing the DLNR to dispose of State land. To prevent individuals and organizations from obtaining public lands for solely personal gain, strong 'āina based qualifications must be in place for organizations to enter into co-management agreements.

Mahalo for the opportunity to be heard on SB 2979.

Chris Cramer
Chris Cramer
Executive Director



'Āina Loko I'a Ma Niu a me Kuli'ou'ou Restoration Timeline



SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:54:41 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lea Hong	Testifying for Trust for Public Land	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members:

Trust for Public Land (TPL) strongly supports SB2979. TPL has conserved over 79,000 acres of land and 56 special places throughout Hawai'i Nei in partnership with governmental agencies and NGOs. Through that work, we have encountered countless local communities and community members who are experts in stewarding and caring for their lands. Therefore, TPL strongly supports community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

While the demand for collaborative mālama‘āina continues to grow, no consistent legal pathway exists for Department of Land and Natural Resources to enter into community co-management agreements. Although several mechanisms exist (e.g., curatorships, permits, concessions, community-based subsistence fishing areas), these all vary significantly in form and function, often causing various administrative delays and issues.

Please consider incorporating three friendly amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, that reflect community feedback on this effort: (1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; (2) replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “‘āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

The logical next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our ‘āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a new tool to enable more Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR and mālama our public trust ‘āina. Please support this longstanding effort, and **PASSSB2979** out of your committee

I apologize I am not able to attend this hearing in person or by Zoom due to pre-existing scheduling conflict.

Mahalo -

Lea Hong, Hawai'i State Director



HE'EIA
NATIONAL ESTUARINE
RESEARCH RESERVE

Testimony on behalf of He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

Strongly Supporting SB 2979

Senate Water, Land, Culture and the Arts Committee

February 17, 2026

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and the members of the Water, Land, Culture and the Arts Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB2979 relating to Community Co-management Agreements. I am submitting this testimony as Director of the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve, which itself is a co-management initiative between the State (UH Mānoa, DLNR, HCDA), the federal government (NOAA), and the Native Hawaiian community in He'eia as represented by several non-profit organizations (Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, Ko'olau Foundation, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi, and Paepae o He'eia).

Co-management marries the deep place-based relationships of community with the administrative authority of the State, and this approach is increasingly looked to as a stewardship model in Hawai'i and around the world. In fact, scholars who study and publish about co-management use Hawai'i as an example in the global community.

On a local scale, several communities are looking forward to the opportunities that this bill will provide for the People of Place to take care of their Place. I can professionally attest to the many problems that the community of He'eia has experienced with the management of He'eia State Park over the years, and we are looking at this measure as a way that the community can work together with DLNR to make sure the State lands in He'eia are cared for in a pono way.

This bill would be a big step forward on a path that has thus far proven to be fruitful, so I encourage you to support it. Thank you for your consideration.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Kawika Winter, Ph.D.

Director, He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve



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Mckenzie Au

*Community-Based Economic
Development Project Associate*

Date: February 17, 2026

To: Senator Chris Lee, Chair, Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

From: Brent Kakesako, Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED)

Re: Support for SB2979 and comments

Aloha e Chair Lee, Vice-Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

The Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED) strongly supports SB2979, which would authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and community-based organizations to: enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands and dispose state lands through community co-management agreements; while also establishing qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into community co-management agreements.

HACBED was established in 1992 as a nonprofit statewide intermediary to address social, economic, and environmental justice concerns through community-based economic development. Our team advances its mission with core competencies in the areas of community and organizational capacity building, community and economic development planning, and asset policy development and advocacy.

In our work over the years, we have seen the commitment and struggle of community members and community-based organizations in stewarding 'āina that is connected to the different divisions of DLNR. There is also a growing interest and capacity to engage in collaborative mālama 'āina activities with the different divisions of DLNR but no consistent legal pathway exists across DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements. Several different tools do exist (e.g., curatorships, permits, concessions, community-based subsistence fishing areas), but these all vary significantly in form and function, often causing various administrative delays and managerial issues. As such, we see the authorization of community co-management agreements across DLNR as a huge opportunity for stewardship of 'āina in partnership with the people who know their places the best – and by extension a form of community-based economic development.

We would also support the inclusion of three amendments that are already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, which reflect community feedback on this effort: (1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; (2) replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “‘āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

SB2979 - Testimony in Support and Comments

February 17, 2026 - Page 2

The passage of SB2979 would be an opportunity for reciprocal benefit for DLNR and the state alongside community-based organizations and community members who are truly connected to these important places across our pae 'āina.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Brent N. Kakesako
Executive Director



Date of Hearing: February 18, 2026

To: Chair Chris Lee, Vice Chair Lorraine R. Inouye, and the Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Subject: SB 2979, Relating to Community Co-Management Agreements

Aloha,

We are testifying in strong support of SB 2979, which provides the Department of Land and Natural Resources with the explicit authority to enter into community co-management agreements with qualified community-based organizations for the management of public trust resources. We believe that this measure is a vital step toward securing Hawai'i's food future by empowering local communities to steward the resources upon which our subsistence and health depend.

DLNR has long recognized that it cannot effectively manage the state's vast public trust resources alone, and grassroots communities like Hā'ena, among others, have proven that place-based community co-management is a key solution¹. It is clear that to ensure the long-term health and well-being of our 'āina and people, Native Hawaiian cultural and traditional values and practices must be at the forefront of land management.

The legislature correctly identifies that current temporary permits or "fragmented" management styles are insufficient for long-term health. The most direct benefit of this bill is that a co-management agreement "allocates the sharing of management functions, responsibilities, and the rights of entry and use" for a specific "community co-management unit", meaning that organizations would gain a formalized process and explicit statutory authority to care for lands significant to their communities. The long-term horizon of having up to sixty-five-year-long terms also provides more stability and security. This means communities can invest decades into restoring the soil and ecosystems that support local food production without fear of losing access to that land.

We believe that for our food system to be truly sustainable, it must be grounded in place-based practices that recognize the unique needs of our specific environment. By allowing community-based organizations to co-manage these resources, we ensure that they are protected by those with the essential stewardship, capacity, and local knowledge necessary to manage them effectively. We urge you to pass SB 2979, as it establishes the legal framework to protect and restore the natural resources that are the foundation of Hawai'i's food sovereignty and subsistence practices.

Mahalo,

Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team

#fixourfoodsystem

[1] (2026, February 2). Kānāwai Ho'omalu Kaiāulu: An effort to authorize community co-management agreements (English). Ka Wai Ola.

<https://kawaiola.news/columns/na-oiwi-olino/kanawai-hoomalu-kaiāulu-an-effort-to-authorize-community-co-management-agreements-english/>

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair
The Honorable Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

FROM: Michelle Ka'uhane, COO & Executive Vice President

RE: Testimony in Support for SB 2979, Relating to the Department of Land and
Natural Resources

DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 1:01 pm

LOCATION: Hearing Room 224

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** SB 2979 to authorize community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified Hawai'i-based nonprofit organizations. Protecting natural resources and promoting responsible 'āina stewardship are priority areas within HCF's CHANGE Framework under the Natural Environment sector.

For decades, Native Hawaiian and local community groups throughout Hawai'i have been supporting and collaborating with DLNR to mālama our public trust 'āina. However, the need and interest in collaborative mālama 'āina continues to grow, and no consistent legal pathway exists for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements. Several different tools do exist, but they all vary significantly in form and function, often causing various administrative delays and managerial issues.

Please consider incorporating amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB 2218 and companion SB 2685, that reflect community input on this effort: (1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofits; (2) replacing mentions of "place-based education" with "'āina education" as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling collaborations with "one or more" community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

Currently, HCF partners with the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) to implement the goals of the Holomua Marine Initiative including working with communities to effectively manage our nearshore marine resources around each main Hawaiian island so that our local

resources are available and plentiful, today and for future generations. HCF manages philanthropic donations that supports the Holomua Marine Initiative. By administering a pooled fund and providing grants and contracts to carry out the initiative and build a marine managed areas (MMA) program, we see first-hand the power of community co-management.

Protecting the 'āina, preserving the ocean and its marine life, and ensuring fresh water is critical to the future of our people. DLNR has long acknowledged it cannot alone effectively and sustainably manage all the lands and waters within its purview. Authorizing community co-management agreements will enable our communities to more effectively and sustainably manage Hawai'i's 'āina and waters. Please advance SB 2979.



Hawai'i Conservation Alliance
FOUNDATION

LATE

Testimony in Support of SB2979

Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts
Wednesday February 18, 2026
1:00PM

Position: Support

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

The Hawai'i Conservation Alliance Foundation (HCAF) was founded in 2006 to support and advance the native ecosystem and biocultural conservation work of the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance (HCA) through fundraising, advocacy, and strategic outreach and communications. The HCA is a cooperative collaboration of conservation leaders representing twenty-eight government, education, and non-profit organizations working together to provide unified leadership for Hawai'i's most critical conservation issues. Together, the HCA and the HCAF strive to protect native ecosystems and ensure the unique biodiversity of our islands endures.

HCA has a strong history of supporting community co-management working with and from within various state and federal government agencies to encourage and co-design collaborative management principles and practices that guide the establishment and maintenance of equitable partnerships with communities. In 2018, HCA published its position paper, *Making the Case for Community-Based Adaptive Collaborative Management in Hawai'i*, detailing how effective conservation in Hawai'i is achieved when grounded in the spirit and practice of co-management, a unique and critical relationship that elevates the benefits of cultivating and institutionalizing collaborations with community-based partners.

HCA **strongly supports** SB2979 as a vehicle to support collaborative management of the irreplaceable biocultural resources of Hawai'i nei. The spirit of this measure mirrors that of **HB2218** (and its companion SB2685) and provides the mechanisms to formalize partnerships between community-based organizations and various DLNR divisions who have established deep and meaningful relationships over many years. That work has resulted in successful collaborations that advance innovative regulatory and non-regulatory stewardship actions.

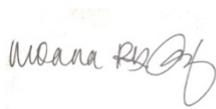
We recommend the following edits to the current measure:

- Exempting community co-management agreements from having to go through the public auction process. These agreements should be negotiated with and made between organizations with well-established working relationships with the DLNR.

- Allowing for one or more organizations to enter into a community co-management agreement. This recognizes the reality that more than one community-based organization has kuleana within a specific geographic area and encourages on-going collaboration between the entities.

For these reasons, we stand in strong **SUPPORT** of **SB2979** and urge you to pass this measure with these recommended additions. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your leadership on this and other important issues within our conservation communities.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Moana P.K. 'Ulu' Ching". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Moana P.K. "Ulu" Ching
Executive Director

House Committees: WLA, JDC
Hawai‘i State Capitol - Room 401
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

16 February 2026

Subject: Support for SB2979

Dear Honorable Representatives:

I am writing in support of SB2979 to authorize the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and community-based organizations to enter into co-management agreements concerning state lands.

My name is Chad Wiggins and I reside in Luala‘i, Waimea, Lalamilo, Kohala Hema, Moku o Keawe, Senate District 4. For 15 years, I worked for The Nature Conservancy Hawai‘i and Palmyra and focused on community co-management of marine and coastal resources. I helped host learning exchanges to Palau, shared findings at international conferences, and coordinated dozens of planning and outreach meetings across Hawai‘i. I am trained as a conservation planning coach and continue to use knowledge and skills I learned today. I am also a current volunteer representative for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the West Hawai‘i Fishery Council, although I am testifying as an individual and not on behalf of any agency or organization.

My first planning experience in Hawai‘i was coordinating the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan to guide federal and state investment in co-management. I was present for the beginning and two iterations of the co-management focused Makai Watch Program. I helped support the formation of multiple networks of practice to empower the people of place to lead development of actions that maintain the traditional practice of stewardship in Hawai‘i.

Early in my career, I was mentored by an experienced conservation professional who worked extensively in Pacific Island nation-states. He introduced me to the Community Managed Marine Area network which was an effort that began in Fiji to re-establish co-management as the standard for ocean management. He also connected me to efforts in the Marshall Islands to create a process by which communities could make decisions based on the best available information to guide activities with the potential to impact ocean resources¹. He helped coach me through contentious public meetings where the people with the deepest connection to places were intimidated by less informed, but equally passionate individuals who considered proposed

¹ <https://www.atollconservation.org/reimaanlok>

conservation measures a threat to their practices and perspectives. He advised me that, in most cases, violence is a predictable outcome before governments devolve authority to community.

My work in Hawai‘i challenges that informed perspective, however. I have seen inspiring leadership, grounded in aloha kekahi i kekahi². This inclusive approach cultivates bold moves on behalf of conservation for future generations that, while not without conflict, focus on the positive outcomes of refraining from harvest until abundance returns. This is the way.

I participated in scientific data collection to demonstrate that fished co-managed areas are as abundant and productive as protected areas without active community stewardship³. I am fortunate to be a scientific diver and conservation practitioner during this revival of recognition that credible people of place must be empowered to chart the course exemplified by the establishment of the Hā‘ena Community Based Subsistence Fishing Area, as well as a similar effort at Miloli‘i where I began my career at a contentious and dangerous public hearing in 2008. Many practitioners and elders did not survive this journey, yet it is hard to imagine that time today, as Hawai‘i moves into a more enlightened approach to empowering communities to advise on and co-develop management interventions that are truly sustainable and effective..

The ocean has led me, through squalls and doldrums, as it did the ocean peoples of the Pacific for thousands of years. The Hawaiian people developed a system of resource management that has not been surpassed by modern analytical methods and democratic governance systems. Community co-management agreements honor the deep knowledge held in places while maintaining the authority of the state to promulgate and enforce sound rules. Together, we manage activities to ensure the environment upon which cultural practice depends can thrive.

Please support this bill as a step in the right direction that affirms and respects all knowledge holders and practitioners in Hawai‘i’s system of governance.

Respectfully,



Chad Wiggins
Waimea Resident
Conservation Practitioner and Scientific Diver
vajrayana0@yahoo.com

² ~Love and respect one another and be loved and respected in return

³ Friedlander, Alan M., Shackeroff, Janna M., Kittinger, John N. 2013. Customary marine resource knowledge and use in contemporary Hawai‘i. Pacific Science. 67(3):441-460.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:24:57 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2979 Many of us mālama ‘āina, aloha ‘āina organization and partners have informal co-management partnerships. However, we need agreements to strengthen the commitments between parties and to ho‘olako (provision) each other for our collaborated stewardship efforts.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:05:17 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Joell Edwards. I am a Wainiha resident, small business owner, and community advocate. **I strongly support SB2979** to authorize community co-management agreements between DLNR and qualified community-based organizations.

Right here in my community of Wainiha/Hā'ena we've already seen success!

The community-based management of Hā'ena State Park by Hui Maka'āinana o Makana and The Hanalei Initiative proves that when local communities are trusted to steward the places they love, the results are real. Visitor impacts were reduced, cultural practices were centered, and the 'āina is healthier because community was empowered to lead with kuleana and mālama.

DLNR has long acknowledged it cannot sustainably manage all public lands alone. The logical next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our 'āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a new tool—enabling more Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR to mālama our public trust lands.

I respectfully ask you to incorporate three friendly amendments already reflected in HB2218 and companion SB2685, based on community feedback:

First, exempting these agreements from the public auction process, consistent with HRS §171-43.1 for nonprofit charities.

Second, replacing “place-based education” with “'āina education.”

And third, allowing collaborations with one or more community-based organizations under the same agreement.

This is a longstanding effort grounded in proven success—like we've seen in Hā'ena.

Please support this measure and pass SB2979 out of your committee.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 9:08:49 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members!

Please **support SB2979** which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:15:54 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of SB2979, a landmark bill that would empower the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to formally enter into long-term community co-management agreements. This legislation represents a profound and necessary shift toward collaborative stewardship, recognizing that the most effective and sustainable management of our public trust resources arises from partnerships with the communities who know, love, and are culturally bound to these places.

For decades, grassroots and lineal descendant organizations have been the de facto stewards of countless wahi pana and natural resources across our islands. They have invested immense volunteer labor, traditional knowledge, and cultural passion into restoration, education, and protection—often without the formal recognition or security needed to sustain their work for generations. SB2979 provides that essential framework. It moves beyond temporary permits and unstable arrangements to authorize agreements of 65 years or more, granted through direct negotiation. This long-term security is not a privilege; it is the necessary foundation for true, multi-generational stewardship.

This bill is a direct fulfillment of our State Constitution’s mandate. Article XI, Section 1, and Article XII, Section 7, charge the state with protecting public trust resources and upholding Native Hawaiian customary and traditional rights. Community co-management is the most powerful tool to achieve both goals simultaneously. By authorizing agreements specifically for the "preservation and practice of all rights customarily and traditionally exercised by Native Hawaiians," and for the restoration of native ecosystems, this bill ensures that management is guided by the very principles of mālama ‘āina that have sustained these islands for millennia.

The qualifications established in SB2979 ensure that agreements are forged with legitimate, place-based organizations deeply rooted in their areas of care. This structure provides clarity and accountability for both the state and the community. Furthermore, by enabling the disposition of public lands through these agreements, the bill provides the tangible authority needed for co-managers to effectively carry out their kuleana, from managing visitor impacts to restoring native forests.

We have seen the success of this model in Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Areas (CBSFAs) and in countless informal partnerships. SB2979 seeks to replicate and strengthen that

success statewide. It is a recognition that the state cannot manage these precious resources alone, and that the most powerful resource we have is the love and knowledge of our own communities.

I urge you to pass SB2979. It is a critical step toward justice, resilience, and a future where the state and its people work in true partnership to heal and protect our ‘āina for all generations to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:01:12 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendall Krumm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Kendall Krumm, Kailua

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 6:34:50 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Galloway	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 11:14:16 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

kimdonghyeon

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 9:48:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:49:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Hixon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. Community-based management is the closest approach Hawaii has to traditional marine management practices that sustained Hawaii for centuries before the arrival of white colonists. I believe that local kuleana for local coastal zones is the best we can do to revive pono practices. Mahalo.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:52:43 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:31:03 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cristina Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Cristina Holt. I live on Hawai'i Island, and I strongly support SB 2979.

For generations, communities have cared for specific places. Not because the State told them to. Because those places are part of who they are.

We all know this truth. The State cannot sustainably manage every shoreline, every stream, every heiau, every trail. It does not have the staff. It does not have the lived knowledge. It does not have the daily relationship.

Communities do.

Right now, grassroots organizations are already stewarding public lands. They restore fishponds. They manage invasive species. They educate keiki. They protect burials. They do this work through patchwork agreements like revocable permits and curatorships that were never designed for long-term care.

SB 2979 brings clarity. It brings structure. It brings durability.

It says the State recognizes that place-based knowledge and Native Hawaiian stewardship are not symbolic. They are operational.

It says the people closest to the land should have a formal seat at the table in managing it.

If we truly believe in mālama 'āina, then we must empower the communities already doing that work. Please pass SB 2979.

Mahalo for your time.

Cristina Holt
Hawai'i Island

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 1:22:16 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

I strongly support SB2979, which authorizes community co-management agreements between the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

I speak from 35 years of experience as a community conservationist. In the 1990s, I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of co-stewardship at Ulupō Heiau, Nā Pōhaku o Hauwahine, and Kawainui Marsh. These successes were born from the efforts of ‘Ahahui Mālama I Ka Lōkahi, an organization I was honored to co-found alongside the late Chuck "Doc" Burrows.

Today, as the Board President for Ka‘ala Farm Inc. in Wai‘anae Valley, I see that these partnerships are more critical than ever. Our current collaboration with DOFAW-DLNR, specifically working with State Protection Forester Mike Walker, is a lifeline for our community. Through this partnership, we are actively mitigating wildfire hazards—work that is impossible for one entity to do alone. Without this partnership, we could not maintain the water bucket areas, wildlife corridors, and fire breaks essential to protecting Wai‘anae Valley.

The State has an affirmative duty to mālama ‘āina, yet DLNR alone cannot effectively manage all lands within its purview. Grassroots communities have the "boots on the ground" and the ancestral knowledge to assist, but we currently lack a consistent, streamlined legal pathway to do so.

I also urge the Committee to incorporate three friendly amendments found in HB2218 and SB2685:

1. Exempt these agreements from the public auction process, as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for nonprofit leases.
2. Replace “place-based education” with “‘āina education” to better reflect our cultural and pedagogical approach.
3. Enable collaborations with “one or more” organizations under a single agreement to encourage multi-group synergy.

Authorizing community co-management agreements is the logical next step to ensure a sustainable future for our public trust lands. I respectfully ask you to PASS SB2979.

‘O ke aloha ‘āina a mau loa,

Keali‘i Pang. Ph.D.

Palolo Valley, O‘ahu

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 1:28:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan Likeke Scheuer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha \Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members,

I strongly support SB2979.

Please consider incorporating three friendly amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, that reflect community feedback on this effort:

(1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; **(2)** replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and **(3)** enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

mahalo

Jonathan Likeke Scheuer

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:12:15 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Crawford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

My name is Scott Crawford, from Hāna, Maui. I am submitting testimony as an individual, but I am writing based on my experience and perspective of having previously worked with Kipahulu Ohana on the establishment of the Kipahulu CBSFA, and in my current role with The Nature Conservancy Maui Marine Program supporting several communities who have active partnerships and co-management relationships with DLNR.

I strongly support SB2979 to authorize community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified Hawai‘i-based nonprofits.

Several marine area designations and other arrangements exist within the state that provide for community place-based organizations to partner with the state for management, and many communities are actively managing their areas. But to date there has been no mechanism to formalize these relationships, establish MOUs or other co-management agreements, define roles and responsibilities, etc.

The next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our ‘āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a tool to enable Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR and formally work together to mālama our public trust ‘āina.

SB2979 is a carefully crafted measure that has been collaboratively drafted over a period of months with input from many stakeholders and community organizations who have experience and interest in working with the state for co-management.

Please support this longstanding effort, and PASS SB2979 out of your committee.

Me ke aloha pumehana

Scott Crawford

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:17:19 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support SB2979** which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Thank you

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 5:52:24 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Chun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Malia Chun, Kekaha, Kaua'i

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:15:31 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pahnelopi mckenzie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2979

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:39:51 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

As someone who has started to work along side DHHL to comanage wildlands and uninhabited homestead lots, I know the potential and more so I know the need for management strategies that empower and include those closest to 'āina.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama 'āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

Noel Shaw, Kalāwahine Hawaiian Homestead

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:34:56 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Jackie Keefe and I am in **strong support of SB2979**, which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements.

We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:43:33 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

Testimony in Support of SB2979 – Community Co-Management Agreements
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts (WLA)
February 18, 2026 – 1:01 p.m.

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

My name is Frederick Smith, and I am a TCBES master's student at UH Hilo focused on marine science and policy. I live in the Kealakekua ahupua'a in South Kona, Hawai'i Island.

I write in **strong support of SB2979.**

In my academic and fieldwork experience, I have seen how much capacity already exists within Hawai'i's communities to steward the places they know best. Across the islands, nonprofit organizations and community networks are monitoring resources, organizing volunteer restoration efforts, and sustaining cultural practices, yet lack clear legal tools to formalize partnerships with the State.

Existing community-led management efforts in Hā'ena, Miloli'i, and Kīpahulu demonstrate that when communities and DLNR work together, outcomes improve. Resource protection is strengthened, cultural knowledge is centered, and long-term resilience becomes more achievable.

However, without clear statutory authority for co-management agreements, DLNR has at times had to rely on tools that were not designed for stewardship. As discussed during the July 25, 2025, Board of Land and Natural Resources meeting, concession-style frameworks are not an appropriate fit for community-based resource management. Stewardship is not a commercial activity, and it should not be treated as one.

SB2979 provides needed clarity. It creates a consistent legal pathway for DLNR to partner with qualified Hawai'i-based nonprofit organizations in a way that aligns authority, accountability, and community capacity. That alignment is essential if we are serious about strengthening place-based stewardship statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Frederick Smith

82-5996 Napo'opo'o Road

Captain Cook (Ka'awaloa), HI 96704

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 3:20:57 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2979. I believe that its provisions of direct negotiations will create better working relationships between the state and community organizations. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 5:06:51 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pamela burrell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

Please support SB2979.

We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

One example here on Kaua'i's NS is what The Hanalei Initiative has accomplished and also the pono use of fishing on the North Shore. Both of these efforts involve and give pride to our community.

I hope you consider the advantages of this bill.

Mahalo,

Pamela Burrell, Kalihiwai, Kaua'i

SUBJECT: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SB2979 - Community Co-Management Agreements; Community-Based Organizations**

Aloha mai e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and the members of the Committee,

My name is Kēhau Springer, and I am a kanaka 'ōiwi practitioner and researcher residing in Kea'au, Moku o Keawe. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SB2979**, which seeks to authorize community co-management agreements between the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

As someone deeply connected to our coastal lands and nearshore waters of Hawai'i, I believe that the stewardship of our environment is a shared responsibility. For generations, local communities and Kanaka 'Ōiwi have been the caretakers of these resources. **He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauwā ke kanaka**—'āina is chief, and we are the servants. We are guided by traditional and generational knowledge and practices that emphasize respect, reciprocity and pono.

Community co-management is not new in Hawai'i. It reflects longstanding 'ike and place-based stewardship systems that have sustained our 'āina and moana for generations. SB2979 acknowledges the vital role that community-based organizations play in managing and protecting our 'āina. By providing a clear legal framework for co-management agreements, this bill empowers communities to actively participate in the stewardship of public lands and waters, ensuring that management practices are culturally appropriate and ecologically sound.

I respectfully urge the Committee to consider the following amendments, which have been incorporated into similar legislation (HB2218 and SB2685) and reflect community feedback:

- **Exempt these agreements from the public auction process**, as permitted under HRS § 171-43.1 for leases to nonprofit charities. This exemption would facilitate more efficient and equitable partnerships between DLNR and community organizations.
- **Replace references to “place-based education” with “'āina education”** to more accurately reflect the cultural and educational objectives of these agreements.
- **Allow for collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations** within a single co-management agreement, promoting inclusivity and collective stewardship.

By passing SB2979 with these amendments, we can strengthen the partnership between the State and local communities, ensuring that our natural resources are managed with the care and wisdom they deserve. Mahalo nui loa to this committee for advancing SB2979 and for standing in support of Hawai'i's people, moana, 'āina, culture and lāhui. I respectfully urge your full support of this measure. Mahalo nui for your consideration!

Na'u

Shauna Kēhaunani Springer

na Shauna Kēhaunani Springer
Kea'au, Moku o Keawe, Hawai'i
Founder & Executive Director, Ka Pa'akai Consulting
Member of Nā Kai 'Ewalu
PhD Candidate, Te Whare Wānaga o Waikato (The University of Waikato)

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:15:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your consideration!

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:20:26 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dustin K Palos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

I **strongly support** SB2979, which would authorize community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

The State has an affirmative duty to mālama‘āina, care for the public trust lands and waters of Hawai‘i. Caring for our precious ‘āina (that which feeds us all) requires collective kuleana (responsibility), and as DLNR has long acknowledged, it alone cannot effectively and sustainably manage all the lands and waters within its purview. For decades, grassroots communities throughout Hawai‘i have supported and collaborated with DLNR to mālama the places we all love and call home. But while the need and interest in collaborative mālama‘āina continues to grow, no consistent legal pathway exists for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements. Several tools exist (e.g., curatorships, permits, concessions, community-based subsistence fishing areas), but they vary significantly in form and function, often causing administrative delays and managerial issues.

Please consider incorporating three friendly amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, that reflect community feedback on this effort:

(1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; (2) replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “‘āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

The logical next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our ‘āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a new tool to enable more Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR and mālama our public trust ‘āina. Please support this longstanding effort and **PASS SB2979** out of your committee.

‘O ke aloha ‘āina momona,

Dustin Palos

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:27:31 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mina Elison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai esteemed lawmakers,

Please support SB2979 which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements. We know that grassroots and lineal descendant communities have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding resources. These efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements established through enacting legislation to do so by the state.

SB 2979 seeks to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management. The heart of this legislation is supported by the Hawaii State Constitution which supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements, the lack of statutory authority and a formalized process limits their effectiveness. Through SB 2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB 2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Mahalo for your aloha for our 'aina,

Mina Elison, Ke'ei, Kona Hema, Hawai'i

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:44:34 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of SB2979.

Proper management and restoration of lands is a difficult task, especially financially, for any organization, non-profit or for-profit. These co-managing agreements should be helpful and it make it easier for multiple organizations to collaboratively properly care for a space.

There are many organizations who have the interest and knowledge on how to best manage a space to ensure a thriving ecosystem and community, so passing this bill will be helpful in making these organizations available to manage these lands.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:54:02 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is **Nanea Lo**, and I submit this testimony in strong support of SB 2979, which identifies and acknowledges the efficacy of community co-management agreements.

For decades, grassroots organizations and lineal descendant communities have collaborated with government agencies to care for wahi pana and the surrounding natural and cultural resources. These efforts are grounded in generational knowledge, cultural practice, and deep kuleana to place. However, without long-term, formalized co-management authority established in statute, these partnerships often lack stability and sustainability. SB 2979 would provide the legal framework necessary to strengthen and sustain these efforts for the long term.

This measure seeks to authorize community co-management agreements with qualified community-based organizations that honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based stewardship practices. The heart of this legislation aligns with the Hawai‘i State Constitution, which affirms the State’s obligation to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources as public trust resources for present and future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Currently, community–government partnerships operate through mechanisms such as curatorships, revocable permits, and concession agreements. While valuable, these tools lack clear statutory authority for long-term co-management and limit the effectiveness and continuity of community stewardship. SB 2979 would authorize the Board to enter into community co-management agreements, through direct negotiation and without public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for periods exceeding sixty-five years. This long-term structure is essential for meaningful restoration, monitoring, and intergenerational stewardship.

Community-based co-management has already led to the establishment of community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing to steward their own places. These efforts demonstrate that community-led management is not theoretical—it is proven, effective, and rooted in cultural practice. SB 2979 strengthens and formalizes what communities are already doing to care for our biocultural resources.

By enabling state-supported community co-management agreements between the Department of Land and Natural Resources and community partners, this measure will strengthen existing stewardship efforts and help establish resilient, place-based systems of care across our islands.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Member

Hawai‘i Workers Center Board Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

350 Hawai‘i Member

Carbon Cashback Hawai‘i Member

Hawai‘i Tax Fairness Coalition Member

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:01:27 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kahakuhailoa Poepoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and the rest of the commission.

My name is Kahakuhailoa Poepoe and I am a generational subsistence lawai‘a (fisherman) from the island of Moloka‘i, and my family have been stewards to the island, especially the Mo‘omomi Coast for over 5 generations. This Bill would allow communities like ours to enter into community co-management agreements with the DLNR, and ultimately decide, as traditional practitioners, what rules and regulations should be created/enforced in our own areas that we have come to know so well. Our skilled kūpuna have been managing these systems for generations under the konohiki system, and as a result of the overthrow of the ‘aikapu, missionary influence, and ultimately the illegal overthrow of 1893, those practices were void, and our public trust resources began to suffer. However, despite the loss of the konohiki system, kua‘āina, or Hawaiians who come from rural communities have continued to be observant of their areas, and have continued to develop their management practices, and now in the year 2026, we have seen 3 successful community co-management examples, Miloli‘i, Hā‘ena, and Kīpahulu CBSFAs, who have managed their fisheries through traditional practice systems in collaboration with the state. The state has the mana, or power, to give these native communities the ability to exercise authority over their respective ‘āina, and the traditional practitioners in our communities have the ‘ike, or knowledge, on our public trust resources and what is available; and by working together we can work towards replenishing our public trust resources into what they once were.

I am also recommending a few amendments to the bill in it's current state, to (1) exempt these agreements from the public auction process (2) replace mentions of "place-based" education with "‘āina education", and (3) allow collaborations between one or more community organizations.

Mahalo for all you do and for considering passing SB2979,

Me ke aloha, Kahakuhailoa Poepoe



Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: SB 2979

Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 1:01 p.m. Conference Room 224

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

HAPA strongly supports SB2979. The legislature has identified grassroot communities which have spent decades collaborating with government agencies to care for spaces (wahi pana) and the surrounding resources. The legislature also finds that “these efforts would be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term community co-management agreements.”

Acknowledging the Department of Land and Natural Resources’ comment on the topic of entering into community co-management, the current tools – short-term permits, rights-of-entry, revocable agreements, or concession contracts – do not adequately support community based co-management. SB2979 would provide a framework for the state to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations who honor traditional Native Hawaiian concepts of mālama ‘āina and place-based practices for effective management.

Article XI, section 1, and Article XII, Section 7, of the Hawaii State Constitution supports co-management agreements as a means of restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and religious purposes.

Through SB2979, the board may enter into community co-management agreements, by direct negotiation and without recourse to public auction, with qualified community-based organizations for a time period exceeding sixty-five years. This will provide a framework to enable more advantageous pathways to securing funding to support costs of running and administering successful programs.

Community-based co-management has established community-based subsistence fishing areas, and additional communities are organizing, all of which would benefit from long-term co-management agreements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the management efforts currently sustained by the organizations performing the work to-date.

Please support SB2979 in enabling a state supported community co-management agreement between DLNR and partners that would strengthen existing efforts and serve to establish a resilient island of place-based practice and sustained care to the work being done.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is written below the text 'Respectfully,'.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:53:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Isaac Carroo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

I **strongly support** SB2979 to authorize community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

The State has an affirmative duty to mālama ‘āina, care for the public trust lands and waters of Hawai‘i. Caring for our precious ‘āina (that which feeds us all) requires collective kuleana (responsibility), and as DLNR has long acknowledged, it alone cannot effectively and sustainably manage all the lands and waters within its purview. For decades, grassroots communities throughout Hawai‘i have been supporting and collaborating with DLNR to mālama the places we all love and call home. But while the need and interest in collaborative mālama ‘āina continues to grow, no consistent legal pathway exists for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements. Several different tools do exist (e.g., curatorships, permits, concessions, community-based subsistence fishing areas), but these all vary significantly in form and function, often causing various administrative delays and managerial issues.

Comanagement is also a rapidly growing approach in the other U.S. states that allows the Federal government to work with Federally Recognized Tribes to do similar projects. Since there is no such designation for Kanaka Maoli, the way that kuleana finds expression is through community groups that qualify here. This bill can position Hawai‘i as a leader in this space nationally and internationally.

Please consider incorporating three friendly amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, that reflect community feedback on this effort:

(1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; (2) replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “‘āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

The logical next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our ‘āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a new tool to enable more Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR and mālama our public trust ‘āina. Please support this longstanding effort, and **PASS SB2979** out of your committee.

‘O ke aloha ‘āina momona,

Isaac Carroo

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:27:49 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ostroski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support SB2979, authorizing DLNR to enter into co-management agreements with community-based organizations for state lands, aiming to improve stewardship. This is critical to the long term stewardship and enforcement of mauka to makai priority areas. This shares the burden and leverages private and philanthropic funding and supports local leadership, communities, and culture while partnering with DLNR.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Carrie Ostroski, Waikoloa, 480-290-1961

February 17, 2026

Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts & Committee on Judiciary
Conference Room 224
State Capitol
415 South Beratania Street

Re: Testimony in support of SB2979

My name is Kaikea Nakachi and I **strongly support SB2979**. I also provided testimony in support of HB2218 on 2/9/26.

As a kanaka maoli born and raised on Hawai'i Island, I have both the traditional knowledge of my kūpuna who sustainably managed themselves for generations, and the experience to see numerous recent tragedies that resulted from inadequate management when 'ike kūpuna is forgotten or worse, ignored. I also hold a master's degree in tropical conservation biology and environmental management and work closely with many community-led organizations that conduct mālama 'āina work. I can proudly and confidently say that the most successful management in Hawai'i today exists when state agencies listen and "allow" people of place to be involved. Unfortunately, these cases are few and far between, and often only result from decades of hard work and resilience on behalf of communities. I strongly support adding authority to streamline and increase the ability for state agencies to activate community participation and involvement.

I have staunchly supported community-led efforts across the pae'āina and will continue to do so. It is my hope that by increasing co-management we can empower communities to have more say in how their ancestral places are managed. The best decisions for water and land resources will be made by those with the generational knowledge and love for these places. We cannot afford to skip over or ignore centuries of experience stewarding land. Through co-management with appropriate community-led organizations, people of place can be empowered to return traditional values and practices, which will only result in positive impacts to their associated resources.

I urge the committee on water on land to support SB2979, and promise that people, places, and resources will all be better off because of it.

Mahalo nui,
Kaikea Nakachi

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:48:39 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pua'ala Pascua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

I strongly support SB2979 to authorize community co-management agreements between the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and qualified community-based organizations.

When the State of Hawai‘i came into possession of the crown lands and seas of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, it also inherited a significant kuleana to mālama ‘āina, care for what would later be known as the public trust lands and waters of Hawai‘i. In present day contexts, caring for the places we care about is most effective when implemented in equitable partnership with the communities who have lived and cared for those places for decades if not generations.

Caring for the lands and seas requires collective kuleana (responsibility), and as DLNR has long acknowledged, it alone cannot effectively and sustainably manage all the lands and waters within its purview. For decades, grassroots communities throughout Hawai‘i have been supporting and collaborating with DLNR to mālama the places we all love and call home. But while the need and interest in collaborative mālama ‘āina continues to grow, no consistent legal pathway exists for DLNR to enter into community co-management agreements. Several different tools do exist (e.g., curatorships, permits, concessions, community-based subsistence fishing areas), but these all vary significantly in form and function, often causing various administrative delays and managerial issues.

Please consider incorporating three friendly amendments already in similar versions of this bill, HB2218 and companion SB2685, that reflect community feedback on this effort:

(1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; **(2)** replacing mentions of “place-based education” with “ ‘āina education” as one of the purposes for these agreements; and **(3)** enabling potential collaborations with “one or more” community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

The logical next step to more effectively and sustainably manage our ‘āina is to authorize community co-management agreements as a new tool to enable more Native Hawaiian and local community groups to partner with DLNR and mālama our public trust ‘āina. Please support this longstanding effort, and **PASS SB2979** out of your committee.

Na‘u me ka mahalo,

Pua‘ala Pascua

LATE

Testimony in Strong Support of SB2979 with amendments

Aloha Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye:

My name is Mina Morita. I serve as Vice President of the Board of the Hanalei Initiative; however, today I submit testimony in my personal capacity as a Hanalei resident in strong support of Senate Bill 2979 with some suggested amendments, mainly adopting the language from Senate Bill 2685, which is the most current version the working group submitted for drafting before bill introduction.

I am deeply proud of the work my community—in particular Hui Maka‘āinana o Makana, the lineal descendants of Hā‘ena, Kaua‘i—has undertaken in the stewardship of Hā‘ena State Park and the surrounding nearshore waters in partnership with the Department of Land and Natural Resources. Through careful planning, coordination, and the empowerment of North Shore communities, this collaboration has created an exemplary, place-based model of resource management that can be shared with other visitor-impacted communities across Hawai‘i.

This work reflects nearly three decades of community commitment, preceding my own service as a State Representative, and has continued to flourish through the leadership of Speaker Nadine Nakamura in convening community members, government agencies, and other key stakeholders toward sustainable solutions.

Yet despite this success, existing tools available to the Department of Land and Natural Resources remain limited to short-term revocable permits, concessions, or similar transactional arrangements. These instruments fail to reflect the kuleana embraced by community-based stewards as long-term partners to DLNR and instead create uncertainty that undermines sustained investment in mālama ‘āina.

The concept outlined in SB2979 addresses this gap by explicitly authorizing community co-management agreements between DLNR and qualified community-based organizations, grounded in Native Hawaiian principles of mālama ‘āina and ahupua‘a-based stewardship. These agreements support the preservation of cultural practices, restoration of natural and historical resources, habitat protection, visitor management, and ‘āina-based education.

The DLNR alone cannot sustainably manage Hawai‘i’s public trust resources but as partners with place-based Native Hawaiian and local communities providing essential stewardship, knowledge, and capacity, hopefully this will achieve better outcomes for the ‘āina. Community co-management therefore helps to fulfill the State’s constitutional responsibilities to protect natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

By establishing clear qualifications, accountability standards, adaptive management requirements, and defined roles within written co-management agreements, SB2979 ensures that partnerships are transparent, performance-based, and aligned with community-driven stewardship outcomes.

For communities like Hā'ena—and many others across the pae 'āina—this bill represents the next necessary step: moving from short-term, transactional permissions toward durable, trust-based partnerships that reflect and encourage generations of stewardship and responsibility.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2979 with amendments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mina Morita', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Mina Morita
P.O. Box 791, Hanalei, Kaua'i, HI 96714
herminamorita@gmail.com

LATE

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 5:16:58 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Damon L Murphy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2979

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
Wednesday, February 18, 2026, TIME: 1:01 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

LATE

TO: Senator Chris Lee, Chair, Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair, members of the WLCA Committee
RE: SB SB2979: RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS
FR: Curt Cottrell

SB 2979 authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enter into community co-management agreements, establishes qualifications for eligible community co-managers, and allows for the disposition of public lands through such agreements. ***I strongly support and want to amplify DLNR's and KUA's testimony with additional comments.***

The renowned success of the DLNR's Division of State Park's (DSP) on collaborative co-management at Ha'ena State Park with Hui Maka'āinana O Makana is well documented and demonstrates the paradigm shift from top-down government park management to "community lead, government supported" collaboration – and should be encouraged and continued.

After decades of underfunding - DSP has established a robust revenue base primarily derived from out-of-state visitor entrance and parking fees at 10 DSP park units statewide. Prior to increased revenue, the common tool and approach is to conduct a request for proposals or invitation for bid with private sector entities to support fee collection or management with an aggressive percentage base rent to DSP, and a negotiated percentage to the lessee or permittee. This goal was purely revenue generation vs collaborative management and did not consider community-based partners. The current DSP revenue stream now allows for a shift in focus from purely income to enhanced management – without adding to the State's personnel costs. Instead, this model creates new community jobs. Hui Maka'āinana O Makana now employs 55 neighboring residents to support park management – funded from their share of the visitor-based parking patronage revenue.

The standard IFB-RFP model still applies to certain park units - such as where there is not an engaged non-profit or community stakeholders or where the fee collection may not be sufficient to support this relationship, but this legislation is intended to solidify current partnerships and will likely foster and stimulate the creation of new partners. As an example, DSP is working with several community-based partners and a non-profit on Hawaii Island to establish a comparable co-management partnership at Kealakekua Bay State Historical Park. As with Ha'ena, lineal descendants of this moku are engaged.

Back in the day provisions of Chapter 171 HRS were initially crafted primarily to enable straight up exclusive leases, and the proposed amendments will simply add to the flexibility of DLNR to consider and establish community-based co-management leases for a variety of natural and cultural resources. These amendments provide additional and critical legal tools to the tool chest for enabling co-management.

In concert with community stakeholders, I concur with the following amendments: (1) exempting these agreements from the public auction process as already allowed under HRS § 171-43.1 for leasing to nonprofit charities; (2) replacing mentions of "place-based education" with "āina education" as one of the purposes for these agreements; and (3) enabling potential collaborations with "one or more" community-based organizations being party to the same community co-management agreement.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this timely and important measure.

LATE

SB-2979

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 10:56:44 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/18/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sierra Mcveigh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support sb2979