

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

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON WAYS AND MEANS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Thursday, March 5, 2026, 10:17 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

in consideration of
SB 3169
RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE.

Chairs Dela Cruz and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Wakai, and Members of the Senate Committees on Ways and Means and Economic Development and Tourism,

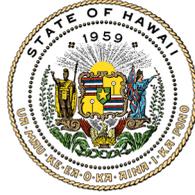
The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports and offers the following comments** on SB 3169 which establishes a five-year Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism for the preservation of Mantokuji Bay and exempts the Pilot Program from certain regulatory requirements.

OPSD appreciates the intent of SB 3169 and concurs that regional shoreline management is an appropriate approach to address coastal hazards in order to protect beaches, dunes, and access to public resources, and to develop proactive and long-term strategies to reduce the risk of coastal hazards to shoreline properties and infrastructure. OPSD has completed multiple phases of its long-term Regional Shoreline Management Initiative, including developing a potential methodology for delineating shoreline regions for adaptation planning purposes, and consultations with relevant State, County and Federal agencies.

OPSD will assist DBEDT with planning and stakeholder coordination for the Coastal Resilience Pilot Program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
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CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

Before the Senate Committees on
WAYS AND MEANS
and
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Thursday, March 05, 2026
10:17 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 3169
RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE

Senate Bill 3169 proposes to establish a five-year Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) for the preservation of Mantokuji Bay. The bill would exempt the pilot program from multiple state and county regulatory requirements and require the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) to conduct a streamlined historic preservation review. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) has significant concerns with this approach and offers the following comments.**

While the Department supports comprehensive coastal resilience planning for Mantokuji Bay, this bill would waive essential environmental and land-use protections and shift substantive shoreline decision-making away from the regulatory agencies charged with protecting public trust resources.

The Department recognizes the urgent and complex erosion issues on the north shore of Maui, which threaten the historic Mantokuji Sōtō Mission in Pā'ia and its associated cemetery. Representatives of the Mission contacted the Department in 2016 regarding erosion at the site. The Department worked with the Mission to review mitigation strategies. In response to the immediate risk to the Mission, the Department issued Emergency Conservation District Use Permit MA 21-02 on August 9, 2020, authorizing the temporary placement of erosion control measures to stabilize the shoreline while long-term mitigation strategies were explored.

Since that time, the Department has remained in regular communication with the Mission's consultants and has conducted site visits. Photos from September 12, 2024, inspection demonstrating the severity of erosion at the Bay are attached to this testimony. Acknowledging the ongoing and evolving nature of the threat, the Department authorized expansions of the original emergency structure and extensions of both the emergency permit and the associated revocable permit for use of State lands. Both permits are currently set to expire in May 2026.

The Department has not yet received a long-term mitigation plan or permit application for review, despite those being conditions of their Emergency Permit

The Department supports the development of a comprehensive coastal resilience strategy for Mantokuji Bay and agrees that effective remediation should address the bay as a natural coastal cell rather than on a parcel-by-parcel basis. However, the Department does not believe that the State should waive its regulatory oversight over public trust resources by exempting any future coastal resilience plan from compliance with Chapter 183C, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), relating to Conservation Districts; Chapter 205A, HRS, relating to Coastal Zone Management; and Chapter 343, HRS, relating to Environmental Review. These statutes are foundational to the State's responsibility to ensure environmental protection, public participation, and informed decision-making.

Senate Bill 3169 also requires SHPD to conduct a streamlined historic preservation review of the proposed program. This is difficult to commit to without first knowing the scope, scale, and specific impacts of the measures that would be proposed under the pilot program, as well as whether sufficient resources would be available to support such an expedited review.

The Department has no objection to DBEDT taking a coordinating or leadership role in the development of a coastal resilience program for Mantokuji Bay. However, DBEDT is not a regulatory agency, and decisions regarding land use within the Conservation District should remain with the Board of Land and Natural Resources, consistent with existing law and the State's public trust obligations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



Figure 1 Sandbags used for temporary erosion control at Mantokuji Bay



Figure 2 Turtle nesting beach fronting the cemetery at Mantokuji Bay



TESTIMONY PROVIDING COMMENTS ON SB3169
RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol

Malaki 5, 2026

10:17 AM

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chairs DeCoite and Dela Cruz, Vice Chairs Wakai and Moriwaki, and Members of the Committees:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS on SB3169**. We recognize the serious and ongoing erosion impacts affecting Mantokuji Bay, including threats to the historic Paia Mantokuji Soto Mission and adjacent cemetery. We agree that addressing erosion at the scale of an entire coastal cell—rather than through continued parcel-by-parcel responses—is an appropriate and necessary conversation for the State.

Our primary concern, however, is that the measure would exempt the proposed regional coastal remediation program from the statutory frameworks the Legislature has established to govern shoreline management (Section 2, subsection (e)). While the bill does not expressly authorize shoreline hardening, it would exempt the program from provisions that otherwise restrict or carefully regulate such structures. Those laws were developed in response to well-documented cumulative impacts of shoreline armoring and reflect decades of scientific analysis and policy deliberation. Several private parcels within Mantokuji Bay appear to be hardened. Scientific findings consistently demonstrate that individual shoreline armoring can exacerbate erosion on adjacent properties and contribute to long-term beach loss across an entire coastal cell, likely contributing to the serious conditions in the bay. The 2017 *Hawai'i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report* identifies shoreline armoring as a primary driver of beach loss statewide and emphasizes avoidance, relocation, and managed retreat in areas experiencing chronic erosion.¹ Legislative findings adopted in Act 16 (2020) similarly acknowledge that hardening undermines long-term coastal resilience.

¹ Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. 2017. [*Hawai'i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report*](#). Prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc. and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands, under the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources Contract No: 64064.

Given this context, we are concerned that exempting a regional program from existing coastal management requirements could undermine the careful balance the State has struck in managing shoreline resources. If a regional remediation effort is to proceed at Mantokuji Bay, it should do so within the established permitting and environmental review framework. Environmental review under Chapter 343 ensures that cumulative impacts, sediment transport dynamics, alternatives such as nature-based approaches or managed retreat, and public trust implications are fully evaluated before significant shoreline interventions occur. Coastal zone management requirements under Chapter 205A similarly ensure that shoreline development and shoreline protection measures are evaluated for consistency with the State's policies to preserve beaches, protect coastal ecosystems, and maintain public access and use of shoreline resources. Conservation District protections under Chapter 183C further require careful review of activities within sensitive coastal areas to ensure that uses of public trust lands are consistent with the long-term protection of natural and cultural resources. These legal frameworks were established with these broader considerations in mind and prioritize long-term, sustainable shoreline management over short-term or immediate responses. Creating project-specific exemptions from these essential environmental protection provisions risks setting a precedent for bypassing safeguards in other erosion-prone areas.

We are also concerned with subsection (c), which would impose a 45-day review deadline for the State Historic Preservation Division. Under HRS Chapter 6E, SHPD is generally afforded 90 days to review projects that may affect historic properties. The proposed project is complex and compressing that timeline may compromise the thoroughness of review, especially considering the historic sites known to be at risk. We believe the existing 90-day timeline is sufficient for this project, and SHPD has acknowledged difficulty with a commitment to a compressed timeline. In addition, we point to the House version of this bill, HB2490, which incorporated several amendments to improve the historic review process proposed, and should the Senate move this bill forward, it should incorporate similar amendments.

In summary, OHA supports thoughtful, science-based regional planning to address erosion at Mantokuji Bay. However, we urge that any such effort proceed within the existing statutory framework designed to protect Hawai'i's public trust resources. **OHA recommends removing subsections (c)-(e) of Section 2, to ensure that long-term resilience and resource protection remain central to the State's approach.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to the careful consideration of our **COMMENTS** on SB3169.



Written Statement of
DR. PATRICK SULLIVAN
FOUNDER & CEO, OCEANIT

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
AND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Thursday, March 5, 2026
10:17 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

In Support of
SB3169 RELATING TO COASTAL RESILIENCE

To: Chair Senator Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Senator Glenn Wakai,
Chair Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Sharon Moriwaki, and
Members of the Committees

From: Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Founder & CEO

Re: Testimony in Support of SB3169

Chairs DeCoite and Dela Cruz, Vice Chairs Wakai and Moriwaki, and Members of the
Committees:

Oceanit Laboratories, Inc. strongly supports SB3169, which establishes a five-year
Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic
Development, and Tourism for the restoration and preservation of Mantokuji Bay,
Paia, Maui.

Oceanit is a forty-year-old Hawaii-based science and engineering firm with deep
experience in coastal resilience, infrastructure protection, and environmental
monitoring. We have seen firsthand how Hawaii's current parcel-by-parcel
regulatory approach fails our coastlines. Sediment transport, wave energy, and
shoreline dynamics do not respect property boundaries. When individual
landowners harden their shoreline in isolation, they often accelerate erosion on
neighboring properties and degrade the very ecosystems that provide natural
coastal protection. The result across Hawaii has been decades of piecemeal
interventions that make the overall problem worse.

SB3169 represents a fundamentally better approach. By treating Mantokuji Bay as
the natural coastal cell it is, approximately one mile of interconnected shoreline
bounded by headlands, this bill enables the kind of comprehensive, science-based
intervention that coastal engineers and geologists have long advocated for. The
bill's streamlined regulatory framework addresses a real and critical barrier:

overlapping state and county jurisdictions and rigid permitting criteria that were never designed for regional coastal management make it effectively impossible to implement bay-wide solutions under current law.

The urgency is clear. The Mantokuji Bay coastline is retreating at approximately 1.6 feet per year. Ancestral burials at the Mantokuji Temple, the oldest Soto Zen Buddhist temple in the State, have already fallen into the ocean. The Hana Highway, the sole transportation corridor for northeast Maui communities, is increasingly exposed to coastal hazards. These losses are irreversible, and the window for effective intervention is narrowing.

Critically, SB3169 maintains all federal regulatory requirements, protects traditional and customary Native Hawaiian rights under the State Constitution, and preserves marine life and water quality protections. The bill does not eliminate oversight; it consolidates and streamlines it so that meaningful coastal restoration can actually proceed. The annual reporting requirement and five-year sunset ensure legislative accountability and create a replicable model that can inform future statewide coastal management policy.

Proposed Amendment: Native Hawaiian Burial Treatment

We respectfully request one amendment to address concerns raised by the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD). The bill's current inadvertent discovery protocol under Section 2(c)(3) could subject Native Hawaiian burial discoveries to the abbreviated process under HAR §13-300-40, which provides only a two-to-three-day decision window with limited descendant and burial council involvement. SHPD has recommended language consistent with HAR §13-300-33, which provides for Island Burial Council authority over preservation-in-place or relocation decisions, full lineal and cultural descendant consultation, and a 45-day determination period.

We ask the Committee to add a new subsection requiring that any Native Hawaiian skeletal remains discovered during pilot program activities receive the full protections of burial council oversight and descendant consultation, with work stoppage until the burial council renders its determination. This amendment would also clarify that documented burials within the Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission cemetery fall under separate Department of Health jurisdiction. Proposed amendment language has been provided to the Committee for its consideration.

This amendment strengthens the bill by proactively addressing cultural protection concerns while preserving the streamlined framework essential to the pilot program's success.

We strongly urge the Committee to pass SB3169 with the proposed burial treatment amendment.





Testimony on SB3169 – Relating to Coastal Resilience

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

First, I want to respectfully acknowledge the deeply painful situation unfolding at the bay at Mantokuji Mission in Pā‘ia. Testimony submitted by members of the Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission describes families witnessing gravestones and ancestral remains being exposed and washed into the ocean. For many families whose loved ones have been laid to rest there for generations, this is not simply a shoreline management issue, it is a profound cultural and spiritual crisis.

Places like Mantokuji carry the history and memory of our communities. They deserve our utmost respect, care, and compassion as we seek solutions.

At the same time, we must also acknowledge an equally important reality: **coastal erosion is occurring, and it is accelerating.** The ocean does not respect property lines or historical boundaries, and Mantokuji Bay functions as a single coastal system shaped by waves, sediment transport, and sea level rise. Ignoring these coastal processes or attempting to override them through short-term measures will not produce lasting solutions.

If anything, the painful situation unfolding in Pā‘ia demonstrates why Hawai‘i must begin planning thoughtfully for long-term coastal adaptation.

I appreciate the intent behind SB3169 to explore regional approaches to shoreline resilience. However, **Section 2(e) of this bill raises serious concerns and should be deleted.**

Section 2(e) proposes sweeping exemptions from several of Hawai‘i’s foundational environmental and coastal protection laws, including environmental review requirements and Coastal Zone Management safeguards. These laws exist to ensure that projects in Hawai‘i’s sensitive coastal zones are carefully evaluated for impacts to beaches, ecosystems, cultural resources, and public access.

Removing these safeguards particularly when the bill does not clearly define the specific project or interventions that may occur creates the possibility that significant shoreline alterations could occur **without proper environmental review, scientific analysis, or community participation.**

Even more concerning, **this provision would set a dangerous statewide precedent.** If the Legislature establishes that coastal projects can bypass environmental review and shoreline

protections through special exemptions, it opens the door for similar requests across Hawai‘i’s coastlines. What begins as a pilot project in one bay could quickly become a model used to sidestep the very safeguards designed to protect our beaches and public trust resources statewide.

Hawai‘i has spent decades building a careful coastal management framework precisely because we have learned, often the hard way, that shoreline armoring and poorly planned interventions can accelerate beach loss and harm coastal ecosystems. Weakening these safeguards now would move us backward.

If the State is going to pursue a pilot program in a culturally and environmentally sensitive location like Mantokuji Bay, the process should involve **more transparency, more science, and more public engagement, not less.**

A meaningful pilot program should examine a full range of coastal adaptation strategies, including:

- Nature-based shoreline restoration
- Sediment management and dune systems
- Nearshore ecosystem and reef health
- Regional shoreline planning
- And importantly, **the feasibility of managed retreat where coastal hazards cannot be sustainably mitigated**

Managed retreat is not an easy conversation, but it is increasingly recognized worldwide as an essential component of responsible coastal planning in areas experiencing chronic erosion and sea level rise. Any serious resilience effort should evaluate it comprehensively alongside other options.

The situation in Pā‘ia deserves thoughtful, respectful solutions that honor the cultural and spiritual significance of the site while also acknowledging the physical realities of a changing coastline.

Compassion for the families affected and stewardship of Hawai‘i’s public shorelines are not opposing goals. In fact, the most respectful path forward is one grounded in transparency, science, and long-term planning.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **delete Section 2(e)** and ensure that any pilot program proceeds with full environmental review and includes a comprehensive evaluation of nature-based solutions and managed retreat strategies.

I also call attention to **Section 2(c)**, which requires determination by State Historic Preservation division **within 45 days** and this **may also set dangerous precedent statewide.**

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Kai Nishiki & Sarah Freistat Pajimola,
Executive Directors, Maui Nui Resiliency Hui



Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Thursday, March 5, 2026, 10:17 AM Hearing in Conference Room 211 on
SB 3169 Relating to Coastal Resilience

TESTIMONY

Douglas Meller, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chairs Dela Cruz & DeCoite, Vice Chairs Moriwaki & Wakai, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii has major concerns with SB 3169. There is no public information and the League has no position concerning planning, design, or funding of the proposed pilot project. However, because Hawaii's normal regulatory procedures and requirements facilitate informed public participation in management of coastal development, we oppose SB 3169 exemption of the project from Chapters 343, 183C, and 205A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). Moreover, neither the DBEDT nor the OPSD has ever publicly requested to exempt this pilot project from public disclosure and evaluation under Chapter 343, HRS; or from DLNR/BLNR determination of the "regulatory" shoreline under Chapter 205A, HRS; or from DLNR/BLNR Conservation District regulation under Chapter 183C, HRS; or from Maui Planning Commission special management and shoreline setback area regulation under Chapter 205A, HRS.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

SB-3169

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:00:27 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/5/2026 12:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eric Moto	Testifying for Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Dela Cruz and DeCoite, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

I am Eric Moto, president of Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission's administrative board and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** Senate Bill 3169, which would establish a pilot program to restore and protect our Mantokuji Bay.

My family has been a part of the Mantokuji congregation for four generations spanning many decades. For over a century, this sacred ground has been the final resting place for our community's ancestors and the only temple on Maui of the Soto Shu Buddhist sect.

Today, I watch in desperation as rising sea levels, and stronger and more frequent wave conditions relentlessly claim more and more of the beach and the land we have always considered sacred and eternal. Gravestones that once stood in neat rows now tumble into the surf. The remains of our kupuna - our parents and grandparents - wash into the sea. This not just property loss, but a spiritual and existential crisis that cuts to the heart of who we are as a community.

And this crisis extends far beyond our temple. The entire Mantokuji Bay shoreline is eroding, threatening neighboring homeowners, the Hana Highway, and the habitat where endangered sea turtles come to rest. We have learned that protecting just Mantokuji's property will not work. The ocean does not care about property lines. The bay is a single natural ecosystem connecting all of us and it must be restored as a whole.

Mantokuji has tried for about ten years and spent close to a million dollars to address this crisis through existing regulatory processes, all while fulfilling every requirement and rule and document request. But this process has not produced a long-term solution, only a temporary sandbag structure fighting a losing battle to hold back the sea.

SB 3169 offers a pilot project that can serve as an example of how to move forward as you are asked time and again to help save and protect Hawaii's eroding shorelines. The program will take a comprehensive, bay-wide approach to coastal restoration while maintaining protections for Native Hawaiian rights and the environment. This is not about saving just our temple, it is about restoring the entire bay for the benefit of all who live on Maui, all who visit our island, and all those who depend upon this shoreline.

I humbly urge you to pass SB 3169 and thank you all for the opportunity to testify.

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

RE: SB 3169 – Relating to Coastal Resilience

Hearing: 3.5.26, 12:01pm

Position: STRONGLY SUPPORT

LATE

My name is Cathleen Murayama, and I am a member of Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission. I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT of SB 3169, which would establish a pilot program to protect Mantokuji Bay.

My family has been part of the Mantokuji congregation since its founding in 1906. My grandfather, Sokyo Ueoka, was the founding minister of Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission. For over a century, this sacred ground has been the final resting place for our community's ancestors. The sandy beach I grew up cherishing is no longer there to share with my grandsons, 8 years and 2 years. Most recently in January, the bank that my grandson would stand on to view the turtles who come to rest is no longer there.

Today, I watch in horror as the ocean steals what we have always considered eternal. Each year the winter swells continue to claim gravestones that once stood in neat rows and eats away at the bank. This January, it finally claimed an ironwood tree on the bank that is no longer. The remains of our kupuna – our grandparents and great-grandparents – wash into the sea. More than property loss – it is a spiritual crisis that cuts to the heart of who we are as a community.

This crisis extends far beyond our temple. The entire Mantokuji Bay shoreline is eroding – threatening homeowners, the Hana Highway, and the habitat where the endangered sea turtles rest. We learned that protecting just our property will not work. The bay is a single natural ecosystem, and it must be restored as a whole.

We have tried for years to address this through existing regulatory processes, but those processes have not produced a long-term solution – only sandbags

holding back the sea. Meanwhile, with every winter swell, the shoreline retreats another foot, then another. We cannot wait any longer!

HB SB 3169 offers a path forward. It takes a comprehensive, bay-wide approach to coastal restoration while maintaining protections for Native Hawaiian rights and the environment. This is not about just our temple – it is about restoring the entire bay for the benefit of everyone who lives here, visits here, and depends on this shoreline.

I urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Cathleen Murayama

Member

Paia Mantokuj Soto Zen Mission

Testimony on SB3169, Relating to Coastal Resilience

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB3169, Relating to Coastal Resilience. I am writing as a concerned Hawai'i resident and as a Kumu Hula who cares deeply about the protection of our 'āina, kai, and the cultural sites and practices rooted along our shorelines.

I support the overall intent of SB3169 to improve coastal resilience and protect our communities, natural resources, and cultural heritage from the worsening impacts of sea level rise and coastal hazards. However, I must respectfully oppose SB3169 **in its current form** and urge the committees to amend it before moving it forward.

Primary Concern: Agency Placement and Lack of Justification

My primary concern is the decision to place the proposed Coastal Resilience Pilot Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), rather than with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), specifically the Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL). DLNR and OCCL have long-standing kuleana over conservation lands, shorelines, and coastal management. Locating a coastal resilience pilot in an economic development agency, without a clear justification in statute or committee reports, risks undermining role clarity, creating duplication, and weakening the effectiveness of the program.

The committees have not clearly explained why DBEDT is selected as the lead agency instead of DLNR/OCCL, nor how DBEDT is expected to

coordinate with DLNR, county agencies, and community partners. If the Legislature believes DBEDT has unique strengths to bring—such as economic planning, financing tools, or federal funding leverage—that rationale should be stated explicitly. As written, the bill does not provide sufficient assurance that the pilot will respect and integrate the existing coastal management framework, or that DBEDT will appropriately defer to DLNR's authorities over shoreline permitting, conservation rules, and enforcement.

A Question of Values: ‘Āina as Commodity or ‘Āina to Protect?

I find it deeply suspicious that DBEDT—and specifically the Tourism component of that agency—is being designated as the lead for coastal resilience work. This raises a fundamental question that must be addressed: Are we viewing our land, our ‘āina, as a commodity to make money off of, or as something sacred to protect and perpetuate for future generations?

Tourism development pressures have long been at odds with the preservation of our shorelines, coastal ecosystems, and cultural sites. Placing coastal resilience authority within an agency whose primary mission includes promoting economic development and tourism creates an inherent conflict of interest. Will resilience projects prioritize the protection of natural resources and Native Hawaiian cultural sites, or will they be shaped by tourism industry interests and revenue generation concerns? The bill does not answer this critical question, and that silence is troubling.

Our coasts are not just economic assets—they are living landscapes that hold the bones of our kūpuna, the knowledge embedded in our fishponds and reefs, the pathways of our mo‘olelo, and the foundation of practices like hula that connect us to place and identity. Any resilience effort must center the health and protection of the ‘āina first, not tourism dollars.

Cultural Resource Protection

As a Kumu Hula, I am especially concerned that any coastal resilience initiative must protect and uplift Native Hawaiian cultural resources and practices. Many of the areas most affected by coastal erosion and sea level rise are also places of significant cultural, spiritual, and historical value—fishponds, heiau, burials, traditional gathering areas, and shoreline pathways that live in our mele and mo‘olelo. A pilot program of this kind should explicitly require consultation with Native Hawaiian practitioners, kūpuna, lineal and cultural descendants, and organizations such as OHA and SHPD, and it should prioritize projects that protect and perpetuate these cultural sites and practices.

Requested Amendments

To strengthen SB3169 and truly honor both environmental protection and administrative efficiency, I respectfully request the following amendments:

1. Reconsider the lead agency or clarify the rationale

- Either relocate the pilot program to DLNR/OCCL, where coastal and conservation land management authority already resides, or
- Clearly justify in the bill and committee reports why DBEDT is designated as the lead, addressing the concern that tourism and economic development priorities may conflict with conservation and cultural protection, and specify how DBEDT must coordinate with DLNR, counties, and community partners.

2. Require formal coordination and role clarity

- Add language requiring a formal interagency structure (for example, MOUs or a working group) that includes DBEDT, DLNR/OCCL, county agencies, and Native Hawaiian community representatives.
- Clearly delineate roles for planning, permitting, enforcement, and community engagement to avoid duplication and confusion.

3. Align the pilot with existing coastal and ocean management frameworks

- Explicitly align the pilot's objectives and activities with existing statewide plans and strategies for coastal resilience and ocean resources management.
 - Require that lessons learned from the pilot be integrated into statewide policy and rulemaking, rather than remaining isolated to a single project or county.
- 4. Strengthen cultural resource and community protection provisions**
- Include explicit language requiring consultation with Native Hawaiian practitioners and organizations when projects may affect cultural or historic sites.
 - Prioritize projects that protect wahi pana, traditional subsistence and gathering areas, and places central to the practice and teaching of hula and other cultural traditions.
 - Ensure that resilience goals center ‘āina protection over tourism or economic development interests.
- 5. Enhance accountability, metrics, and transparency**
- Require annual reports to the Legislature that evaluate both environmental outcomes (such as reduced erosion and protection of habitats and cultural sites) and administrative efficiency (timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and leveraging of external funds).
 - Use these evaluations to determine whether DBEDT is the appropriate long-term home for such work or whether certain functions should be shifted to DLNR.

Conclusion

With these amendments, SB3169 could better reflect our shared kuleana to care for the ‘āina and kai, while also ensuring that public funds are used efficiently, and agencies work together rather than in silos. I support the vision behind this measure and ask that you strengthen its structure so that it truly serves our coasts, our communities, and our cultural heritage—not tourism industry interests.

Mahalo nui for your consideration of my testimony and for your work on behalf of Hawai‘i's people and future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Kana'iaupuni Gomes
Concerned Citizen and Kumu Hula
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Committee Information:

- Economic Development and Tourism (EDT): Senator Lynn DeCoite (Chair), Senator Glenn Wakai (Vice Chair), Senator Carol Fukunaga, Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Senator Kurt Fevella
- Ways and Means (WAM): Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz (Chair), Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki (Vice Chair)

SB-3169

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 3:15:50 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/5/2026 12:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucienne de Naie	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs DeCoite and Dela Cruz, Vice chairs Wakai and Moriwaki and committee members

I would like to go on record as a local North shore resident, OPOSSING this bill as currently written. I support the intent of this bill - to assist a beloved Pa'ia community institution, the Mantokuji Mission. My concern is that the overly broad means of relief proposed - the five year Coastal Resilience Pilot Program- raises significant concerns due to the provisions in SB 3169 that exempt the pilot program from multiple state and county regulatory review processes.

The comprehensive planning approach should be supported by everyone, but the lack of any expert agency oversight mechanism during the process is not a sound strategy for such a sensitive shoreline environment.

Also, does DBEDT have the expertise to manage such a program? DLNR has concerns that seem valid.

It is important that the generational knowledge of the Mantokuji mission community be incorporated into any longer term plans to better manage the entire eroding shoreline in that part of Pa'ia. The shoreline also holds numerous Kanaka Maoli burials as well both east and west of the mission grounds.

Please delete the overly broad exemption language in section 2 (e) 1 to 5 before final decision making.

Mahalo for your consideration

Lucienne de Naie

Huelo , Maui

requirements

March 3, 2026

Aloha,

Thank you for allowing testimony on SB3169 relating to coastal resilience. I have mixed feelings about this bill and companion bill HB2490.

My name is Paul Hanada, I have lived on Maui my entire life as did my parents. My maternal grandparents lived in Paia and was cremated at the Paia Montokuji Soto Zen Mission crematorium. The crematorium is now in the ocean. Their ashes were in the columbarium until my uncles decided to move them to Wailuku.

I remember attending services in the church with my parents and continue to attend Obon festivities there. One of the descendants of the founder of the church is my good friend. In 1972 ago he saved my life in a spearfishing/diving accident.

My parents were avid fishermen. I have been an avid spear fisherman for over 60 years. I have also bottom and pelagic fished from a boat for almost as long. My children and grandchildren all live on Maui and are also fishermen.

Fishermen know and understand the ocean. The nearshore reefs are ancient shorelines that were once above sea level. We bottom fish underwater ancient shorelines and sea cliffs that are 600 to 900 feet deep. Mother Nature will continue to do her thing, regardless of what humans do.

It seems a lot of people view the ocean as an enemy. I consider the ocean my home. It feeds my family and is a place to find peace. It also has no voice. It is my kuleana to protect it.

There are concerns and reservations when an entity can do what they want without regard to the ocean and all the inhabitants. Currently, all projects need to provide a plan to comply with all rules and regulations. However, once permitted, no one is there to ensure compliance, monitor their activities and/or measure the impact on the ocean.

I can empathize with Paia Montokuji. The shoreline fronting their property is experiencing accelerated inland movement not only from sea level rise but also because of hard armoring by adjacent properties.

Past projects at Paia Montokuji did not follow the permitted plans. No one was there to ensure compliance or follow up on concerns. It was not Paia Montokuji's fault.

One example was the use of dirty sand to fill the sand bags. The dirt was released into the ocean when the waves washed over the permeable bags creating a long-lasting turbid plume. Extremely turbid water along with harmful chemicals, suffocate and kill the living reef. I have proof the sand was not to specifications. When brought to the attention of the company in charge, nothing changed. Use of clean sand would have prevented the issue but it seems no one cared.

Not having any accountability, is not in the best interest of the ocean and will set a bad precedent. When the ocean dies, everything connected to it will die.

Mahalo.

LATE

SB-3169

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 8:43:35 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/5/2026 12:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Celia Suzuki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Senate EDT/WAM Committees:

My name is Celia Suzuki and I am a member of the Paia Mantokuji Soto Zen Mission. I am in strong support of SB 3169

I was born and raised on Maui and attended countless events at the Paia Mantokuji Mission, as my grandfather, Sokyo Ueoka, was the founder of the Mission. I have so many memories playing on the beautiful beach behind the church grounds. It is truly devastating to see the unfathomable erosion that has occurred over the years.

This measure is very important in attempting to save the historic Buddhist temple grounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of SB 3169.