

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 10:56 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

in consideration of
SB 3252, SD 1
RELATING TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

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

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **offers comments and concerns** on SB 3252, SD 1, which proposes to amend the powers and duties of the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission and to codify a new "Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Coordinator" position to lead the Commission, in place of the existing and currently filled Commission Coordinator role.

While OPSD supports strengthening statewide climate coordination, this measure removes the current co-chairs—the Chair of the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Director of OPSD—both cabinet-level officials confirmed through the Senate's advice and consent process. Replacing Senate-confirmed leadership with a coordinator raises concerns about accountability, continuity, and institutional authority. Cabinet-level co-chairs provide policy-level direction, cross-agency reach, and direct accountability to the Governor and Legislature, ensuring integrated planning and follow-through.

Under statute, OPSD is responsible for statewide planning, climate and sustainability coordination, and long-range planning and policy alignment across sectors—including land use, sea level rise adaptation, hazard mitigation, infrastructure, housing, economic resilience, and sustainable development. The proposed coordinator's duties substantially duplicate OPSD's statutory responsibilities, creating overlap, diffused accountability, and added fiscal costs to the state.

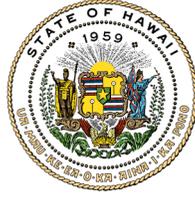
Centering climate planning leadership within DLNR, whose mission focuses on natural resource and state land management, risks narrowing climate strategy to a resource-management lens. Effective climate planning must be comprehensive and statewide, requiring infrastructure investment, climate-adaptive land use, sustainable development, economic transition planning, and cross-sector coordination.

Rather than creating parallel structures, OPSD recommends strengthening and adequately funding existing statutory authorities—including OPSD's—to support statewide climate adaptation and coordination. Funding agencies with existing statutory climate planning and coordination authority will maintain clear leadership, promote fiscal efficiency, and ensure continuity and accountability in Hawai'i's climate efforts.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on SB 3252, SD 1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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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 Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS**

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026
10:56 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 3252, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO CLIMATE PLANNING**

Senate Bill 3252, Senate Draft 1 amends the powers and duties of the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) administered by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department). The bill establishes a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Coordinator position to lead the Commission and appropriates funds. Finally, the bill requires annual reports to the Governor, Legislature, and counties. **The Department offers the following comments.**

This bill recognizes that Hawai'i faces billions of dollars in current and future losses from climate change and strengthens statewide coordination and accountability.

The Department respectfully notes that there already is a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Coordinator position, though this bill amends the duties to serve as the chair of the Commission. This structure is modeled after existing governing boards such as the Board of Land and Natural Resources. This bill would task the chair of the Commission with setting agendas and identifying target actions.

This bill requires agency reporting on plans and proposed actions to meet or exceed climate directives and targets. The Department understands that additional reporting may add administrative burdens for agencies.

The Department notes that, if the Commission's authority and responsibilities are expanded while remaining administratively attached to the Department, it is important that the Commission is adequately resourced to operate independently and not create unintended operational or fiscal

impacts on the Department's existing programs. Clear distinctions regarding staffing, space, and budget structure may be necessary, like other administratively attached entities.

The proposed changes to the membership of the Commission are likely intended to reduce redundancy across agencies. However, under statute, the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) is responsible for statewide planning, climate and sustainability coordination, and long-range planning and policy alignment across sectors—including land use, sea level rise adaptation, hazard mitigation, infrastructure, housing, economic resilience, and sustainable development. The proposed coordinator's duties substantially duplicate OPSD's statutory responsibilities, creating overlap, diffused accountability, and added fiscal costs to the state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

SB-3252-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 6:52:42 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:56:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Oppose

3252 SB RELATING TO CLIMATE PLANNING.

FISCAL RESPONSIBLE, 2 F/T SPECIALIST, COLLABORATE WITH UHM STUDENTS,
NON-PROFITS, CITY DEPARTMENT

SB-3252-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 12:01:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:56:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Laramee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Hawai'i is already experiencing significant and compounding impacts from climate change that have cost the State and residents money, their homes and heartbreakingly their lives. This measure strengthens the State's capacity to coordinate, plan, and implement mitigation and adaptation actions across departments and with county and federal partners. The federal government has done everything in its power to deny the reality of climate change through funding cuts, layoffs, and misinformation campaigns, while frontline communities are ravaged by the impacts. Hawai'i must continue to be a leader in this space to support affordable, reliable, and resilient solutions while reducing the devastating impacts of climate change.

This bill recognizes that Hawai'i faces "billions of dollars in current and future losses" from climate change, including shoreline erosion and sea level rise, rising health and medical costs from urban heat, drought-related agricultural losses, degradation of coral reefs and fisheries, and more frequent severe disasters, costs ultimately borne by residents in both the cost of living and quality of life. The bill strengthens statewide coordination and accountability.

This bill amends the duties of the Climate Change Coordinator to serve as the chair of the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission). This structure modeled after existing state entities such as the Board of Land and Natural Resources, places the leading body in charge of setting agendas and identifying target actions while reducing burdens on agencies with alternate responsibilities.

This bill clarifies the duties and responsibilities of the State to protect residents from volatile fossil fuel prices, food and water insecurity, sea level rise, wildfires, drought, flooding, health risks and billions of dollars in damages, healthcare costs, and loss of property. The bill requires agency reporting on department plans and proposed actions to meet or exceed climate directives and targets, with public availability of reports creating a clearer line of sight from targets to execution. By requiring members of the Commission to provide transparent reporting on how they are accelerating climate action the state will be better prepared to identify gaps and accelerate action. There is a clear need to align agency actions with climate priorities to ensure the long-term resilience of the State. The bill appropriates funds to establish much needed staff positions. The federal government's denial of human caused climate change has limited opportunities for support and technical assistance for implementing practical climate actions within state and county agencies.

The changes to the membership of the Commission will reduce redundancy and identify members that are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agencies identified. The bill also allows contracting capacity, so the Commission can effectively coordinate, analyze risk, and support agencies.

It cannot be emphasized enough that action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement resilient solutions needs to be taken now and accelerated as quickly as possible to avoid billions of dollars of damage and save lives. This bill supports a new structure to support accelerated action for energy security, resiliency, affordability, and healthy and safe communities and ecosystems.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Leah Laramee