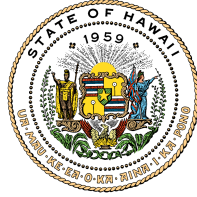


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY
CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER
AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

**Before the House Committee on
FINANCE**

**Thursday, April 2, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 3253, SENATE DRAFT 2, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO CONSERVATION**

Senate Bill 3253, Senate Draft 2, House Draft 1 establishes the Hawai'i Conservation Sanctuary as a nonprofit entity dedicated to protecting and expanding populations of endangered species and other native wildlife in the State. This bill is scheduled to become effective on 7/1/3000. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

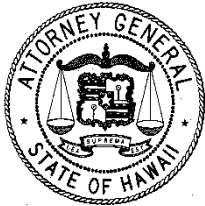
The Department's mission is to protect, conserve, and manage Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources. The Department understands that achieving this mission increasingly depends on partnering with non-governmental organizations, including nonprofit groups that support State conservation efforts and priorities while boosting public engagement and education.

The Department emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the Hawai'i Conservation Sanctuary aligns with existing statutory authorities, and that the governing board clearly defines roles and responsibilities for the Hawai'i Conservation Sanctuary.

The Department supports collaboration and coordination with the Hawai'i Conservation Sanctuary.

In the March 24, 2026, House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection hearing, the Department was asked whether the Legislature has the authority to create nonprofit organizations by statute. The Legislature has established two nonprofit organizations by statute for other purposes: the Hawai'i Employers' Mutual Insurance Company, under Section 431-14A-101, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), and Friends of the Hawai'i State Art Museum, under Section 9-23, HRS.

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



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 3253, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, RELATING TO CONSERVATION.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DATE: Thursday, April 2, 2026

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Danica Patel, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Todd and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments regarding this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a nonprofit entity, the Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary, to collaborate with the State and to create and manage endangered species sanctuaries.

Section 2 of this bill proposes to amend chapter 195D, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to add a new section to "establish" a private nonprofit organization to be named the "Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary". The appropriate means to establish a private nonprofit organization is set forth in chapter 414D, HRS, the Hawaii Nonprofit Corporations Act.

Subsection (e) of the new section added by section 2 of the bill on page 5, lines 10-16, would exempt funds received by the Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary from the conditions related to the receipt of funds in chapter 42F, HRS. If this wording were to remain in the bill, funds transferred to the Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary may be subject to challenge for violation of article VII, section 4, of the Hawaii Constitution, which provides in part: "No grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." Accordingly, we suggest deleting the proposed subsection (e) on page 5, lines 10-16.

Additionally, sections 26-15(b) and 171-3(a), HRS, provide that the Department of Land and Natural Resources shall manage and administer control over wildlife, wildlife sanctuaries, and wildlife resources. Pursuant to section 195D-5(a), HRS, the Department of Land and Natural Resources has statutory authority to acquire land for the specific purpose of conservation, management, and protection of species. For more information on the Department of Land and Natural Resources' current wildlife sanctuary program, please visit: <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wildlife/sanctuaries>. The bill does not indicate how, if at all, the Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary would be tied to the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

We respectfully ask the Committee to consider our comments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



March 24, 2026

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

Aloha, my name is Jonnetta Peters, Executive Director of Conservation Council for Hawai'i (CCH), a non-profit environmental and conservation organization who serves to protect and save native species and their habitats. CCH is the Hawai'i affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. **CCH IS IN STRONG SUPPORT of SB3253 SD2 HD1.**

CCH has long advocated for our very precious endangered species and the habitat that they need to survive in. The struggle for some of these species are getting harder with the many challenges facing our native environment, both terrestrial and marine.

This measure will give us a much better future for our critically endangered, threatened, and vulnerable native and endemic species and offer them a chance of survival and an opportunity to educate, not only our community, but the world about our unique biodiversity.

Our colleagues in Aotearoa (New Zealand), specifically at Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne in Wellington, have successfully brought back many species from the brink of extinction and continue to teach the world that endemic species sanctuaries are feasible. They developed into a self-sufficient entity, bringing in monies mainly through eco-tourism and education. Hawai'i could attain worldwide acclaim through a highly successful native species sanctuary.

Instead of Hawai'i's claim to be the Extinction Capitol of the World, we could develop a similar sanctuary as Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne. To learn about our extinct species of 'o'o birds, our children and community learn about them through books and visiting the Bishop Museum. This native and endemic species sanctuary would provide hands on learning, and give the future generations, and the world a living classroom unique to Hawai'i.

Accordingly, I urge you to **PASS SB3253 SD2 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Jonnetta Peters
Executive Director

**Telephone/Fax: 224.338-6511 | email: info@conservehi.org
web: www.conservehawaii.org | P.O. Box 2923, Honolulu, HI 96802**

President: Bret Nainoa Mossman | **Vice President:** Les Welsh | **Secretary:** Colleen Heyer
Treasurer: Mashuri Waite, PhD |

Directors: Erica Amundson, Puanani Anderson-Fung, Maka'ala Ka'auomoana, Steven Lee Montgomery, PhD,
Emily Sarasa |

Executive Director: Jonnetta "Jonee" Peters **Operations and Events Manager:** Leah Kocher

National Wildlife Federation Region 12 Director: Rachel Sprague

National Wildlife Federation Pacific Region Associate Director: Emily Martin

Kō Hawai'i leo no nā holoholona lōhiu – Hawai'i's voice for wildlife | State Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation



Date: 4/1/26

Bill: SB 3253: Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary

Hearing Date: 4/2/26

Committee: FIN

Aloha Chair & Vice Chair and Committee Members,

Sustainable Coastlines Hawai'i is in support of SB 3253 related to developing a Hawai'i Conservation Sanctuary program. As an organization that believes its mission and work are derived from a cohesive protection of ecosystems, we know that our endangered species are vital to the overall health of our islands. This bill presents a unique way to tackle the problem of species loss that continues to threaten our islands.

With our support, we also believe this bill must include a robust community access plan and an understanding that community co-management programs presented during this session should work in tandem with these efforts. The intent of the sanctuaries should be to first work directly with community leaders to understand how any changes will affect those who respectfully interact with any area that will be deemed a sanctuary.

We are interested in seeing how this bill can effectively integrate with green fee priorities to make a healthier 'āina-based approach to recreation, visitor interaction, and community access.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With Aloha,

Rafael Bergstrom

Executive Director, Sustainable Coastlines Hawai'i

SB-3253-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 3:16:41 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reina Krueger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I support this bill because it focuses on protecting endangered species and restoring ecosystems in Hawai‘i, which is especially important given how many native species here are at risk of extinction. The idea of creating conservation sanctuaries based on successful models like Zealandia is really promising, especially since it combines habitat protection, research, and community education.

I also think it’s a smart approach to include funding through tourism and public engagement, since that can make conservation efforts more sustainable long-term instead of relying only on state funding.

That said, I do think it’s important to be cautious about how this is implemented. Bringing in species from outside the state and allowing operations in agricultural areas could create unintended environmental impacts if not carefully managed. Strong oversight and clear ecological guidelines will be important to make sure conservation stays the top priority.

I think this is a positive step for biodiversity protection in Hawai‘i, as long as it’s done thoughtfully and responsibly.

Thanks!

Reina Krueger