HB 1123 HD1 – RELATING TO FISHING

Chair Lee, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

House Bill 1123, House Draft 1, as currently written, would require the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to perform a stock assessment on the fish species in the affected area prior to adopting any new rules to regulate fishing. The Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) respectfully opposes the bill in its present iteration.

For reasons that have been described by DLNR and others in written testimony, stock assessments are notoriously difficult to conduct and require an enormous amount of biological data on each individual species that is affected, and the interactions of those species. Therefore, we believe that requiring stock assessments as a prerequisite for adoption of fishing regulations would be an unsound and untenable management practice. HIMB supports science-based management, using reliable methods to make the most informed decisions. Unfortunately, stock assessments would neither be a reliable or a timely method, especially with current staffing capacity at DLNR. Rather than single-species approaches like stock assessments, ecosystem-based approaches that utilize integrated assessments are likely to be much more effective for managing Hawai‘i’s nearshore fisheries.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.