



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Water & Land and Higher Education
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SB 1178 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR HE'EIA NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

Chairs Rhoads and Kahele, Vice Chairs Gabbard and Kidani and members of the committees:

The University of Hawaii supports SB 1788, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the university's board of regents approved executive biennium budget. This measure will allow the University of Hawai'i to staff the newly designated He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). The designation and inclusion of He'eia in the national network of estuarine reserve sites, marks the culmination of two years of collaborative action by members of the local community (Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, the Ko'olaupoko Foundation, Paepae O He'eia, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi) and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology).

The He'eia NERR is unlike any other in that it is a coalescence of community and science; federal, state and local efforts; and modern science and traditional knowledge that aims to implement and understand how restoration efforts in the He'eia wetland influence the health of the adjacent estuarine ecosystem. The federal funding that accompanies the He'eia NERR will serve to forward activities that explicitly expose the youth of Hawai'i, and students across the US, to a broad array of science concepts from land use to ecology to marine biology all in the context of traditional land management. The four positions requested in SB 1178 will coordinate research, management, education and cultural activities inside the He'eia NERR and are, in my opinion, the lynchpin to successful collaborative stewardship of the He'eia watershed.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of this important Senate Bill.