SB 2316   MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A PERIMETER FENCE TO PROTECT THE MAUNA KEA FOREST RESERVE

Testimony Presented Before the Senate Committee on Water and Land

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by

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Chair Hee, Vice Chair Kokubun and Members of the Committee

The University of Hawai`i at Hilo offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 2316 regarding an appropriation of funds for the construction and maintenance of a perimeter fence to protect the Mauna Kea Forest Reserve.

Properly constructed and maintained perimeter fences are key to long-term protection of native ecosystems and habitat for endangered flora and fauna from the devastating impact of feral animals. This is especially true on Mauna Kea, where the native mamane tree (Sophora chrysophylla) provides exclusive habitat for the endangered palila bird (Loxioides bailleui), and is the lone location for the endangered Mauna Kea silversword (Argyroxiphium sandwicense, subsp. sandwicense) and numerous other rare and unique elements of Hawaiian biota.

Further, effective perimeter fencing will enhance the ongoing federal court-ordered feral sheep and goat eradication efforts by limiting ingress from adjoining areas, ensuring efficient and effective use of the resources and funding expended to meet that order. Feral animal eradication efforts are far more effective if the target population is finite, which properly constructed and maintained perimeter fencing helps to ensure.

The University would also encourage funding be appropriated for active, ongoing management of the Mauna Kea Forest Reserve, specifically for mitigating the potentially devastating impacts of wildfire, and for non-native invasive species control. Effective long-term protection can only be attained through a combination of protective fencing and active management actions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.