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## Letter of Support - USGS Building in Hilo

1 message

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**Sharon Ziegler-Chong** <ziegler@hawaii.edu>

Tue, Nov 1, 2022 at 12:56 AM

To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Cc: Becky Ostertag <ostertag@hawaii.edu>, Patrick Hart <pjhart@hawaii.edu>, Kaleihii'ikapoli Rapoza <kaleihii@hawaii.edu>, Bonnie Irwin <bdirwin@hawaii.edu>

Aloha mai,

Please accept this letter of support for the USGS building proposed in Hilo.

Mahalo nui,

SZC

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Sharon Ziegler-Chong

Research and Community Partnerships

University of Hawaii at Hilo

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\*\*\*Not sure of a Hawaiian word? Look it up: <http://wehewehe.org/>\*\*\*



**Ziegler-Chong - Letter of Support - USGS building.pdf**

137K



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**HILO**

October 31, 2022

To: Committee Chairperson Nahale-a  
Vice-Chair Westerman  
Vice Chair Higaki  
Members of the Board of Regents Committee on Planning and Facilities.

From: Sharon Ziegler-Chong, Director, Research & Community Partnerships, UHH   
Unit Leader, Hawai'i Cooperative Studies Unit

The Research & Community Partnerships (RCP) Office at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo is excited to provide our strong support for the new USGS Building proposed on the site above Komohana Street. I have worked closely with the USGS Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center (PIERC) since 1997 in various efforts that have focused on both helping our island resources recover, regenerate and thrive, as well as have supported the recruitment and success of local island students into conservation careers. Several notable collaborations include:

- PIERC worked with UH Hilo in 1997 to create a summer internship program for Native Hawaiian and kama'āina students that has now become the highly successful Pacific Internship Programs for Exploring Science (PIPES) at UHH. Almost 25 years later, PIERC has hosted 1 - 5 interns each summer, providing cutting edge research experiences for island youth.
- PIERC and UH Hilo worked together to create the Hawai'i Cooperative Studies Unit (HCSU), a research collaboration focused on engaging UHH faculty and staff in island research with federal, state, and NGO partners. Cooperative agreement funding to support HCSU efforts has averaged \$3M/year for almost 20 years, supporting annually 15-20 staff, students, and faculty collaborations. These HCSU hires are embedded in the PIERC office and will be located at the new USGS building.
- Works with UH Hilo faculty to provide lectures, guided field trip opportunities, and research collaborations for competitive grant opportunities with UH Hilo classes, faculty and students.

One challenge of these collaborations frequently overcome has been the remoteness from UH Hilo campus of the current PIERC building location in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. With a new location directly above campus, these opportunities for collaborations, student and faculty engagement and partnerships between the two organizations will surely increase. PIERC is a strong and important partner for UH Hilo efforts and we look forward to working with them as even closer neighbors in the future.





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## Support for Occupancy Agreement with USGS, HVO, and PIERC

1 message

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**Brian Wissman** <wissman@hawaii.edu>  
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Nov 1, 2022 at 10:19 AM

Aloha UH Board of Regents,

Please see my attached letter of support for the proposed long-term use and occupancy agreement between the University of Hawai'i and the U.S. Department of the Interior, USGS.

Mahalo,

Brian Wissman



**USGS HVO PIERC Support.pdf**

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November 1st, 2022

Re: UH Hilo Long-Term Use and Occupancy Agreement with USGS, HVO, and PIERC

Dear UH Board of Regents:

It is a pleasure to offer my strong support for the proposed long-term use and occupancy agreement between the University of Hawai'i and the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey for a Hawaiian Volcano Observatory and Pacific Island Ecosystem Research Center facility in Hilo. The HVO and PIERC have long partnered with programs in the College of Natural and Health Sciences, such as Biology and Geology, to collaborate on common research activities and interests. Beyond research opportunities, this partnership also enhances the University of Hawaii student experience by providing access to shared equipment and research scientists. Your approval for these facilities on the UH Hilo campus is important to develop and strengthen these already successful efforts.

Sincerely,

Brian Wissman, Ph.D.  
Interim Dean, College of Natural and Health Sciences  
Professor, Mathematics  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo  
wissman@hawaii.edu

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**written testimony for Nov 3 2022 BOR meeting**

1 message

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**Becky Ostertag** <ostertag@hawaii.edu>  
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Nov 1, 2022 at 3:10 PM

Please see testimony below and attached.

University of Hawaii Board of Regents Committee on Planning and Facilities Meeting, November 3, 2022  
University of Hawai'i  
Board Of Regents Committee on Planning and Facilities

1 November 2022

Dear Committee Chairperson Nahale-a, Vice-Chair Westerman, Vice Chair Higaki, and members of the Board of Regents Committee on Planning and Facilities

I am writing to express my extremely strong support for the request for approval of a long-term lease and occupancy agreement between the University of Hawaii and the Department of Interior, to allow habitation of the USGS Hawai'i Volcano Observatory (HVO) and the Pacific Island Ecosystem Research Center (PIERC) on the UH Hilo campus. The inclusion of USGS HVO and PIERC scientists in Hilo at especially on the UH Hilo campus would have enormous benefits to the faculty, staff, students and community of the island and the state.

USGS scientists have a long association with UH Hilo faculty and students. As an ecologist, I am most familiar with the scientists of PIERC, whose work is in basic biological problems relevant to conservation (e.g., endangered species, invasive species, ecosystem services). This kind of research is exactly the type that interest UH Hilo faculty and staff—working on applied conservation problems with direct relevance to management. Because of this common interest, PIERC scientists have worked with many graduate and undergraduate students at UH Hilo. In a quick survey, I counted that 11 different PIERC scientists served on the Master's thesis committees of 22 students in the Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science program since its inception in 2004. In addition, another three scientists who are affiliated with PIERC (through the Hawai'i Cooperative Studies Unit) have mentored three additional students. And of the top of my head, I can think of at least 10 former TCBES students that have been employed by USGS PIERC or HCSU before, during, or after their degree. At the undergraduate level, I count at least 31 Pacific Internship Programs for Exploring Science (PIPES) summer interns that have worked through PIERC and at least several have also been interns under a program at HVO. Other undergraduates also develop connections with these scientists through their faculty mentors, many of whom collaborate with USGS scientists, and this has spawned Directed Studies and other research opportunities for UH Hilo students.

Why have so many of our students worked with USGS scientists? Simply put, these scientists offer up expertise beyond what we have on staff for UH Hilo. In particular, they have depth in wildlife ecology that we lack here, and I imagine the situation is similar for geology, but I can speak less to that. These full-time research scientists are also trained in modern analytical and quantitative approaches, can offer laboratory equipment or field opportunities unavailable on campus, and have experience working with the federal government and the public that many academics lack. They provide guest lectures for classes, networking opportunities, logistical support, equipment, grant writing, consultation, and collaboration—they are invaluable resources in our community. In my own research, I am currently collaborating with USGS and HCSU staff on a NSF-funded project with myself as PI, and USGS as a sub-contract.

Given all that these scientists provide for us, it would be wonderful if UH Hilo can reciprocate and provide office space and a physical home. I learned long ago that for academic work, proximity is everything. When people are physically closer by, we interact with them more. As an example, I regularly see my collaborators at USDA Forest Service, whose building is on Nowelo Street on our campus, much more than I see my USGS PIERC collaborations in Volcano. The benefits of being on the same campus will be multiplicative, providing synergies that will benefit the UH Hilo community, but also the general public, given the applied nature of the research. This association is a win-win, providing much needed stability and space for PIERC and HVO, and a wealth of opportunities for UH Hilo, and I urge you to consider supporting this request.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Ostertag  
[she/her/hers]  
Professor, Department of Biology  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo  
[200 W. Kāwili Street](#)  
[Hilo, HI 96720 USA](#)  
808-932-7573 (phone), 808-932-7295 (fax)  
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 **USGS building support letter.pdf**  
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