



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

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by  
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HCR 127      URGING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM THE LAST WEEK IN JULY OF  
EACH YEAR AS CONSERVATION WEEK

Chair Menor, Vice Chair Hooser, and Members of the Committee:

This resolution is to be applauded for recognizing the significance of the very unique natural environments to be found in our islands and the need to remind all of us of this on a regular basis. It is hard to keep the attention of busy people focused on their surroundings and they come to be taken for granted. Once taken for granted their maintenance needs are frequently neglected and we wake up to find various parts of them endangered or rapidly deteriorating. A designated conservation week with a well planned and varied schedule of educational and outreach activities provides the vehicle for a potentially high impact regular reminder of the constant requirements of mālama 'āina.

To this end my testimony is designed to support the spirit of this resolution. However, when I look at the list of agencies to be contacted for support and sponsorship I see a narrowness of focus and the likelihood of having the event perpetuate an unfortunate separation between our conservation of natural environments and conservation of resources more generally. The way in which we live our lives, build our communities and our urban environments, are all part of our pattern of resource use and abuse.

Just as carbon dioxide emissions are produced locally but circulate globally, so do many other of items emitted by our consumer society, and those items impact our island environments. I have been to Midway, have dissected the boluses regurgitated by Laysan albatross parents for feeding their young, and have found discarded cigarette lighters, toothbrushes, small plastic children's toys of all kinds, plastic washers, and more. This casually accumulated and discarded detritus is circulating in the oceans and ends up depriving albatross chicks of nutritious food. I have also seen the volume of discarded fishing gear that must be hauled off the reef each year to preserve the coral and prevent monk seals becoming entangled in it. I mention this merely to point out that there is no way in which the natural environment can be conserved without focusing on resource conservation more broadly. To that end I suggest that major resource providers – such as HECO, the Board of Water Supply, major waste management companies, and major retailers – should also be approached as sponsors of Conservation Week and that activities included during the week include attention to the impact of consumption patterns on the environments we want to conserve together with realistic discussion of changes that can be made.